

FSFW HEALTH, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY WAVE 2 REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

TOPIC 4: RESEARCH ON POLICY-LEVEL ENABLERS OF SMOKING CESSATION AND HARM REDUCTION: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF RISK AND HARM LEVELS

Issue date:	January 18, 2019
Question window ends:	March 18, 2019
Closing date:	April 18, 2019
Closing time:	5pm US Eastern Standard Time
Contact information:	support@smokefreeworld.org
Submit questions to:	support@smokefreeworld.org
Submit proposals to:	See submission instructions in RFP
Financing instrument:	N/A (expression of interest only)
Financing amount:	N/A
Financing duration:	N/A

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF RISK AND HARM LEVELS: INTRODUCTION

Harm reduction efforts are designed to mitigate the negative health, social and economic consequences of certain human behaviors, such as substance abuse. These efforts represent an alternative to abstinence-only approaches and acknowledge a non-binary approach to risk, in that the targeted behavior may continue, but with a lower risk of harm. Public health harm reduction approaches have successfully been applied to intravenous drug abuse (e.g., with needle exchanges and safe injection sites) and to high-risk sexual activity (e.g., with condom distribution and increased availability of screening and pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV infection).

Harm reduction is part of the definition of tobacco control used in the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC). It has historically been hampered by the unavailability of lower-risk products (with the exception of Swedish snus, which has very restricted availability beyond Sweden). With a broad range of ANDS emerging recently, it is imperative that smoking harm reduction approaches are explored, especially given the emerging scientific consensus that ANDS are likely to significantly reduce risk for smokers.

Crucial to harm reduction approaches is communicating effectively the risks and harms of targeted behaviors and their alternatives, not only to those engaged in these behaviors but also to their social circle, healthcare professionals, educators and policymakers. In the context of smoking harm reduction, we should focus in particular on the risks and harms associated with nicotine versus those associated with the other components of cigarette smoke. “People smoke for the nicotine but die from the tar” was first articulated in 1976,¹ but many people still believe that nicotine causes cancer and other serious health problems.²

The Foundation is interested in funding research that could determine best practices in advancing harm reduction. This work could be used to inform policymakers, educators, clinicians and public health groups in all fields about how to communicate risk to help reduce behavior-related harms.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST: LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL PUBLIC HEALTH EFFORTS AROUND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF RISK & HARM

Research question

What are examples of public health efforts around risk & harm communications, and what can we learn from these?

There are many factors which could affect the success of harm reduction efforts, including the magnitude of the risk, public perceptions of the behavior, media representation, public health infrastructure, access to information, and access to health care –all of which are gendered. Therefore, we cannot generalize about risk communication strategies, and they would not necessarily work across the globe or even among different subpopulations within a country. For this reason, we are interested in learning not only what was done, but why it did or did not work in particular scenarios, and how successful approaches could be designed around tobacco harm reduction and nicotine.

2 ¹ Russell, M.J. Low-tar medium-nicotine cigarettes: a new approach to safer smoking. *BMJ* 1976; 1:1430-1433

² <https://www.smokefreeworld.org/sites/default/files/uploads/derek-yach-press-conference-presentation.pdf>

As the Foundation is dedicated to facilitating a dialogue about effective risk communication strategies, we envision providing support for a series of high-level workshops focusing on the topic. The effort is likely to be overseen by an organization which would coordinate efforts globally. Ideally, this group would oversee the development of a number of workshops to explore:

1. Case studies of harm reduction efforts including:
 - a. Country-specific case studies of both successful and unsuccessful efforts in risk and harm communication
 - b. Comparison of the effectiveness of particular strategies in countries with differing environments (e.g., healthcare systems, development, social norms, gender equality)
 - c. Effectiveness of risk and harm communication strategies among subpopulations, including gender, within a country or region
2. Potential for best risk and harm communication strategies to translate to the field of nicotine harm reduction
3. Potential avenues for research into risk communication, particularly topics which may be relevant to tobacco harm reduction.

The Foundation is interested to hear from organizations with experience in leading this type of effort.

Submission Instructions

If you are interested in engaging with us on this topic, please complete the form featured on our online portal, which can be accessed [here](#). This link will always start a new form.

You may save a started form at any time by using the 'Save & Finish Later' button at the end of each page. If you do so, please use [this link](#) to return to the log-in screen to access the saved form.

A list of application portal FAQs can be found [here](#).

For all access inquiries, please contact us at support@smokefreeworld.org.