

**Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
For Teams to Conduct
Research to Inform Public Policy Regarding Electronic Cigarettes
in California**

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
TOBACCO-RELATED DISEASE RESEARCH PROGRAM**

**Qualifications Receipt Due Date: June 10, 2015
Anticipated Award Period: July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016**

The Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program (TRDRP) is sponsoring a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to select a team of California-based public policy and consumer researchers to conduct an investigation of Californians' attitudes about electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) in order to further inform state and local public policy and regulatory options including licensing requirements and the assessment of fees and taxes. The growing popularity, especially among youth, coupled with the heated debate within the tobacco control community about the potential risks and benefits of these products, has generated dozens of news stories and articles each week conveying a mix of contradictory and often confusing consumer messages. It is likely that the California public has a wide range of beliefs about and attitudes towards these products and that these vary across demographic groups and communities. Policy makers often lack reliable information about Californians views of e-cigarettes, including determining the extent of their understanding of the need and support for a range of regulatory measures.

It is anticipated that a total of up to \$100,000 (direct costs) in TRDRP funding will be allocated for this research.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Electronic cigarettes are reshaping the tobacco use landscape; a game changing disruptive technology is emerging as "Nicotine Addiction: The Next Generation". E-Cigarettes are battery operated devices that aerosolize nicotine laced propylene glycol, glycerin, and flavorings. As of January 2015, there were over 400 distinct e-cigarette brands, including closed systems, often called cig-a-likes, open tank systems that are refillable, and an assortment of hookah pens, vape pens, and vaporizers/aerosolizers. Correspondently, there are currently over 7700 unique flavors of nicotine liquid formulations, including the 13 flavors banned by the FDA in 2009 for conventional cigarettes. It should be noted that menthol-flavored e-cigarette "juice" is a mainstay of this product, a flavor the FDA failed to ban some 6 years ago.

There is much anecdotal evidence and a few studies finding that these devices have and are helping some smokers with quitting conventional cigarettes. However, the preponderance of the current data on e-cigarettes finds them to be inhibiting quitting and/or leading to the continued dual use of both conventional cigarettes and e-cigarettes.

The long-term health impact of e-cigarettes is as yet unknown. Still many claim that since e-cigarettes have fewer toxic chemicals and many at lower levels than conventional cigarettes that they will have less of a negative health impact. On the other hand, tank systems with increased battery power have been shown to produce levels of carbonyl compounds (formaldehyde) equal to those produced by conventional cigarettes. Moreover, while nicotine itself is thought to be one of the lesser evils in conventional cigarettes, it is a highly toxic poison and whether aerosolized or combusted, nicotine can have direct detrimental cardiovascular effects and adversely affect fetal development. Thus while electronic cigarettes *may be safer* than conventional cigarettes, their *actual safety* has not been established.

In January 2015, the California Department of Public Health launched a new media campaign to warn against the surge of e-cigarette use. The campaign, *Wake Up*, exposes some of the health risks associated with e-cigarettes, dispels the misinformation about e-cigarettes, and highlights the marketing practices being used by e-cigarette companies and the tobacco industry to sell these products and attract a new generation into a potential life-time of nicotine addiction. The primary target of state's media campaign is 18-24 year olds. However, the advertising blitz is likely to have population level impacts. The campaign is a 14-week, multi-faceted advertising effort that will run through June 30, 2015. The campaign currently includes television ads, online advertising, and digital radio ads with outdoor advertising and cinema ads to be phased in at a later date. Almost immediately after the announcement of the campaign, e-cigarette enthusiasts launched an online counter campaign.

It is likely that these battling media campaigns will generate many questions, concerns and opinions among Californians, including regarding their understanding of the need and support for state and local policy and regulatory efforts.

II. E-Cigarette Regulation and Taxation Issues: A Burning Issue

In 2014, the FDA moved to designate e-cigarettes a tobacco product which would ultimately result in the products being subject to federal review and regulatory control. Unfortunately, the federal process is likely to take years and will likely be subject to court challenges by e-cigarette companies and the tobacco industry, delaying federal regulation even further.

As of April 2015, e-cigarettes are wholly unregulated in the state of California, beyond a restriction on the sale of devices to minors. E-cigarettes are not currently included within the Smoke Free Act, the STAKE Act, or the California Cigarette and Tobacco Licensing Act. As a result, e-cigarettes are also not subject to additional state taxes and/or fees that could, through increases in the price of the product, serve to discourage use by youth and as a potential revenue stream to compensate for new costs to the state generated by e-cigarettes (e.g., poison control, public health, research).

To address the lack of knowledge regarding alternatives for state regulations, the TRDRP recently convened expert public policy researchers, key representatives from state government, the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, health voluntaries, tobacco control advocates, and representatives of California's priority populations to review the current regulatory status and consider options for regulation, licensing and taxation. A description and

documents from the meeting can be found at our website: <http://www.trdrp.org/highlights-news-events/e-cigs-tax-policy.html>

The goals of the meeting were to:

- Initiate a discussion among key tobacco research and control stakeholders in California about the many issues surrounding the regulation and taxation of e-cigarettes
- Review the current status of e-cigarette taxation, both domestically and internationally
- Identify research needs surrounding the taxation of e-cigarettes

The meeting served to illuminate the many thorny issues concerning e-cigarette regulation and taxation: should e-cigarettes be defined as a tobacco product for state regulatory purposes; should the liquid and or the device be regulated; should it be taxed at the same rate as conventional cigarettes; and what are the critical public policy research questions that must be addressed concerning the regulation and taxation of e-cigarettes? A number of key research questions were posed as part of the meeting, including: the extent to which the public is knowledgeable about the product and engaged in its controversies; the extent to which the public is aware of e-cigarette marketing and its possible relationship to increased use by youth; the extent to which the public is aware of the lack of current regulation and attitudes towards this unregulated environment; and how public and consumer knowledge and attitudes might vary across the diverse communities and populations in California.

It is within this context and role as the program charged with meeting current tobacco-related research challenges of the state that the TRDRP is sponsoring this specific research effort.

III. Qualifications Sought

TRDRP is interested in identifying a multi-disciplinary team comprised of public policy *and* consumer research experts. Teams should demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the California health and public policy environment with specific knowledge of the regulatory environment of tobacco products serving as an added strength. The team should be competent in both qualitative and quantitative consumer research; informant interviewing, focus groups and public polling. Teams may be affiliated with an individual organization or may be comprised of members from multiple organizations. To the degree that it is possible, the team should also possess knowledge and experience with the diverse populations and communities that comprise California.

A team must demonstrate and submit qualifications covering *these two areas of expertise*:

1. Health and public policy – formulation of health and public policy approaches and the analyses of the impact of governmental and program policies
2. Consumer and public opinion research – use of key informant interviews, population surveys and focus groups to determine consumer opinions and behavior

A team must also demonstrate and submit qualifications covering *at least one of these two areas of expertise*:

1. Policy Initiatives – community-based experience in the development and implementation of public policy initiatives
2. Tobacco control evaluation – analyses and evaluation of tobacco control policies and programs and their impact on population level health

Additionally, the research team needs to demonstrate the capacity to complete the research within nine months, allowing the remaining three months of the grant for producing a final report and dissemination of findings. Applicants could demonstrate this ability through the following:

1. Currently existing personnel and material resources available to be committed to this effort.
2. Access to relevant databases to conduct the work and/or have the capacity to collect the data necessary to complete the proposed investigation in the limited timeframe.
3. Currently existing capacity to engage and collaborate with diverse communities throughout California.
4. Demonstrated capacity to work in collaboration with a range of policy-makers and stakeholders, including state agencies and voluntary health organizations.

IV. ELIGIBILITY

1. Qualifications may be submitted by any public, private, or nonprofit organization in California such as health and/or public policy foundations, research corporations or institutes, universities, colleges, state and local government units, and community-based organizations.
2. Qualifications must identify a principal investigator and at least one co-principal investigator and they must represent the **two required areas of expertise**, health/public policy *and* consumer/public opinion research.
3. The principal investigator must qualify, at the time of submission of qualifications, for that status under the organization's policies. The principal investigator must be prepared to commit **at least 10%** of effort to the sponsored research.

V. REVIEW AND AWARD

Evaluation Criteria:

The TRDRP will convene a review panel composed of program staff, advisors, and external experts to evaluate team qualifications based on the following criteria:

- a. Experience of the team with research and policy analyses in

- the required areas of expertise.
- b. Availability of team members and the ability to commit personnel, time, and other resources to the project.
 - c. Demonstrated understanding of the scope of the research to be provided, including a description of potential research questions, research design and appropriate methodologies to address those questions, and identification of which types of work are to be performed by a subcontractor, if any.
 - d. Demonstrated understanding of applicable rules, regulations, policies, and other requirements associated with the applicable regulations, policies, and program to be studied and other pertinent state and federal programs.
 - e. Capacity and experience with the timely dissemination of policy-related data and research findings to key decision-makers and the general public.
 - f. Ability to meet TRDRP scheduling requirements and to complete the research within the stated timelines.
 - g. Past performance of the investigators, specific staff, and sub-awardees that demonstrate capability to successfully complete similar projects.
 - h. The extent to which the proposal is responsive to the intent of the RFQ.

Details of Award:

A maximum of \$100,000 in direct costs for a 12 month period is allocated for this award, including nine months for completion of the research and three months for reporting and dissemination of findings. Indirect costs for organizations including UC campuses will be allowed and should be considered in addition to the direct costs for the award.

The successful applicants will be required to attend TRDRP-sponsored meetings with tobacco control representatives on a periodic basis. The initial meeting will include a discussion to refine the specific research questions that will guide the project. This meeting will take place in July of 2015 (see timeline). The applicant will then meet periodically with these representatives to inform them of the progress of the project and to present interim findings. **It will be expected that the team will produce a written report with analyses and recommendations to share with all tobacco control representatives and disseminate through- out the state by no later than April 30, 2016.**

VI. SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Submission Deadline:

Please contact Dr. Phillip Gardiner (phillip.gardiner@ucop.edu) for application

forms. Qualification proposals must be submitted by e-mail directly to Dr. Gardiner no later than 5:00 p.m. PDT on Wednesday, June 10, 2015. Face pages with the Principal Investigator's and organization's signing official must be submitted as hard copies on or before the date above. Qualifications will not be reviewed if they are submitted as hard copies or by fax.

VII. TIMELINE

Request for Qualifications (RFQ) Released	May 7, 2015
Qualifications Submission Due	June 10, 2015
Qualifications Reviewed	Mid-late June 2015
Award Notification and Start	July 1, 2015
Initial Research Advisory Committee and Research Team Meeting	Mid-late July 2015

X. CONTACT INFORMATION

Submission of applications and inquiries pertinent to this RFQ should be directed to:

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