

Citizen engagement for alcohol policy change at the local level: The US Experience

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Brief Overview

- **History/structure** of two NGO's working in states for population-level change
- Discussion of **tools and strategies** for citizen engagement
- A look at the **barriers** to engagement and the **organizing gap**



- **Located in Nebraska – one of 50 states**
- **In the middle of the country**
- **Fewer than 2 million residents; about half urban/suburban, remainder rural (although most of land rural)**
- **Very conservative state with strong focus on individual responsibility**

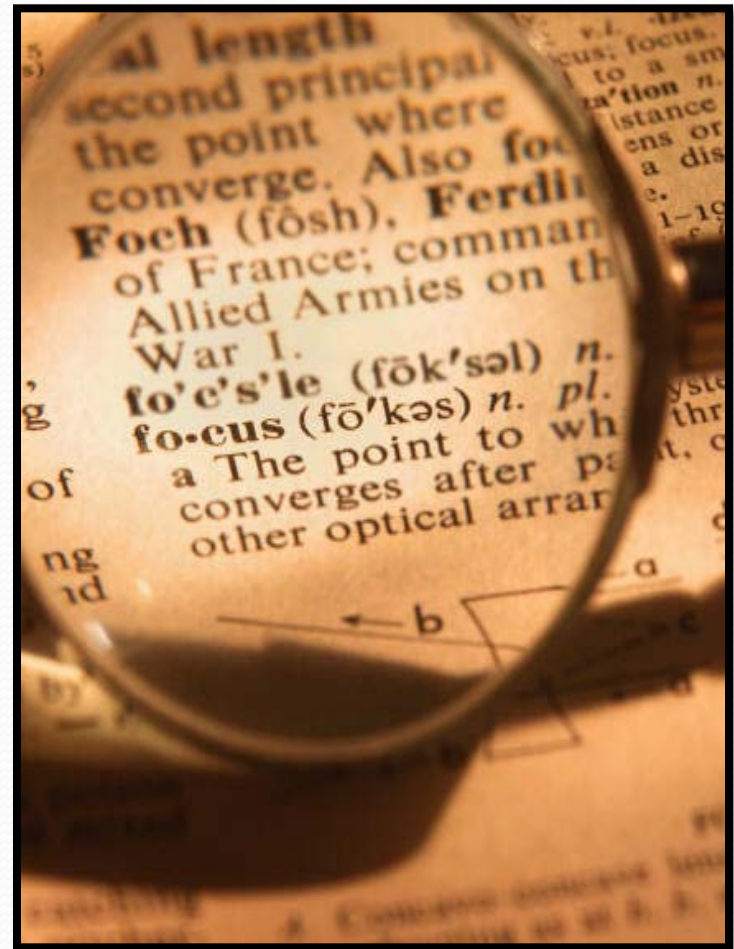
Project Extra Mile

- Network of community-based partnerships across the state: engaging *local voices*
- 1995 – efforts began; created NGO/nonprofit
- *Science based, population approach*

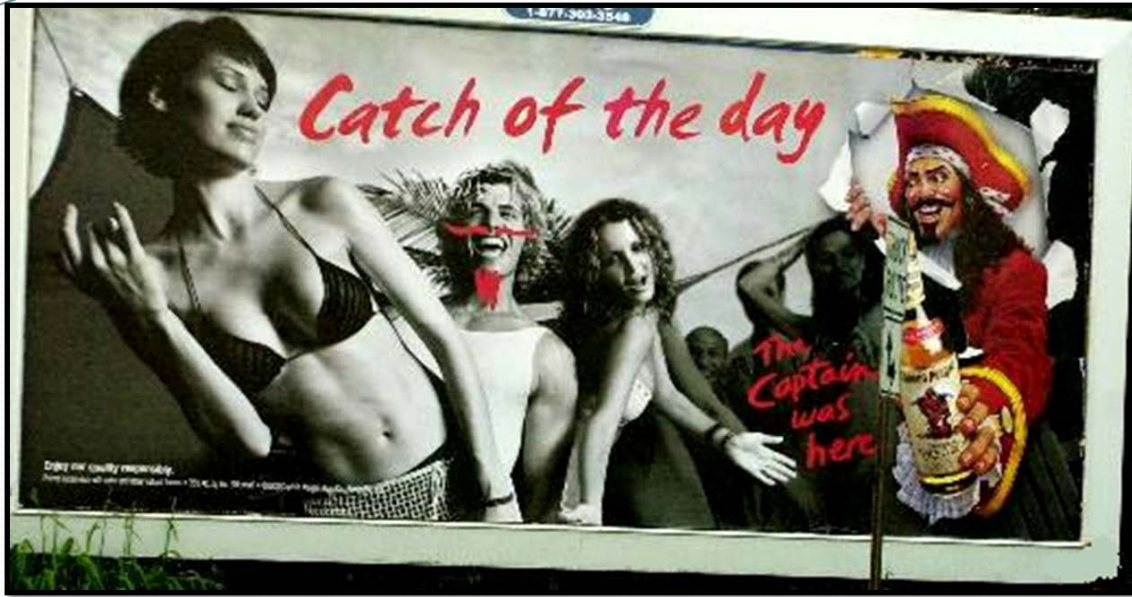


Project Extra Mile

- Focus on underage drinking while *connecting efforts to the larger issue of excessive consumption*
- Work with local and state media, enforcement agencies and policy process







2001

2003





Law Revision Commission 2008

The Partnership

FOR A HEALTHIER NEW YORK CITY



Tools & Strategies

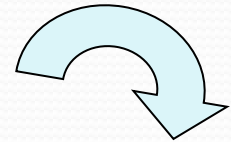


Media Advocacy

*The **strategic** use
of the media to
advance your
policy or social
goal.*



Media Advocacy



FRONT PAGE!

- Interviews
- Letters to the Editor
 - Gets the community talking



Youth-Led News Conference on Alcopops



Community Organizing

Community organizing is a long-term approach in which the people affected by an issue identify problems and take action to achieve solutions



Community Organizing: The Power of Power



CHANGE

Focus on Our Goal

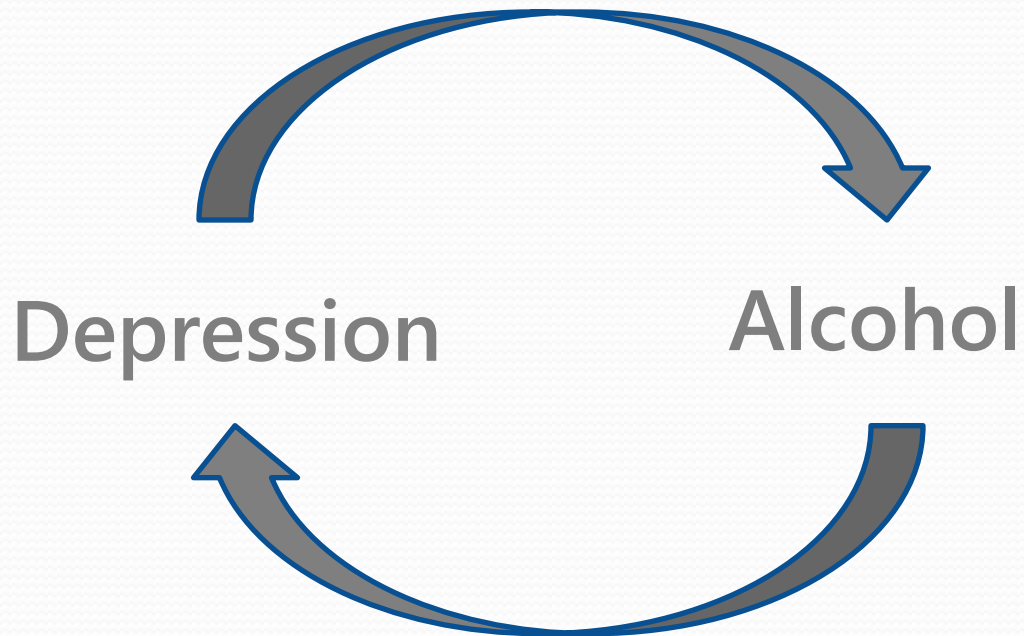
To organize our communities in order to reduce underage and excessive alcohol use and save lives.



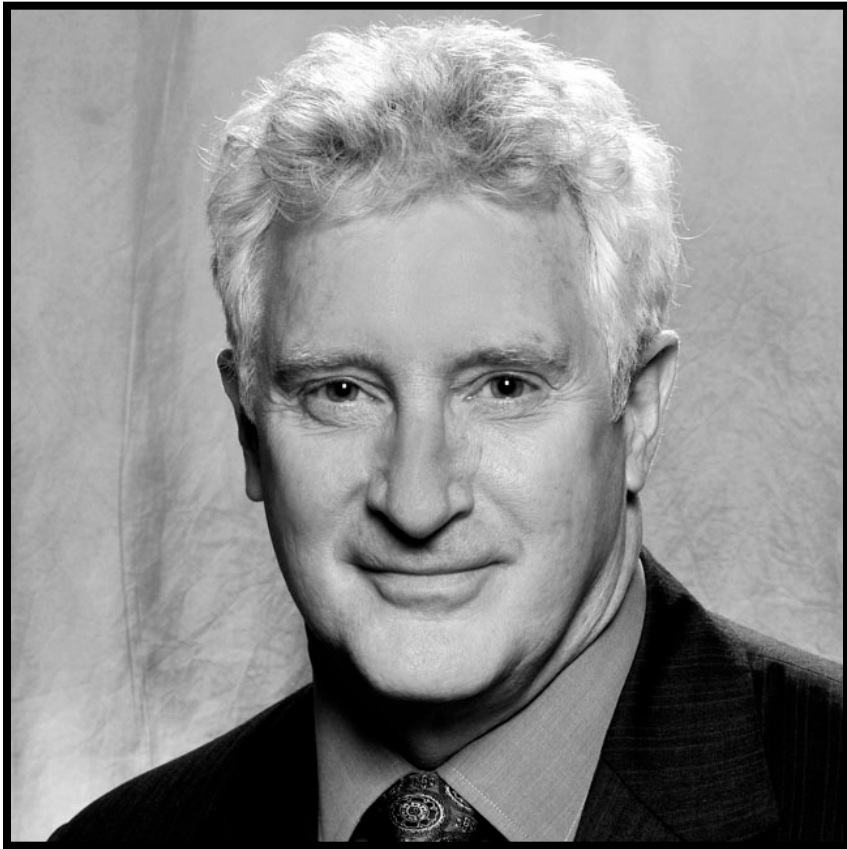
People More than Paper



Translation of Research



The Vicious Circle



David Bender
Chief Strategic Officer
Compass Mark

“Put 100 adults in a room with 100 bottles of liquor. Come back later and you'll find 7 of them drinking half the bottles. The other 93 are cleaning up the mess.”



- About 70% of all deaths in US
- Over 70% of deaths in NYS



- 75% of all US healthcare costs
- 83% of Medicaid costs



- Healthcare costs driving NYS & national budget problems

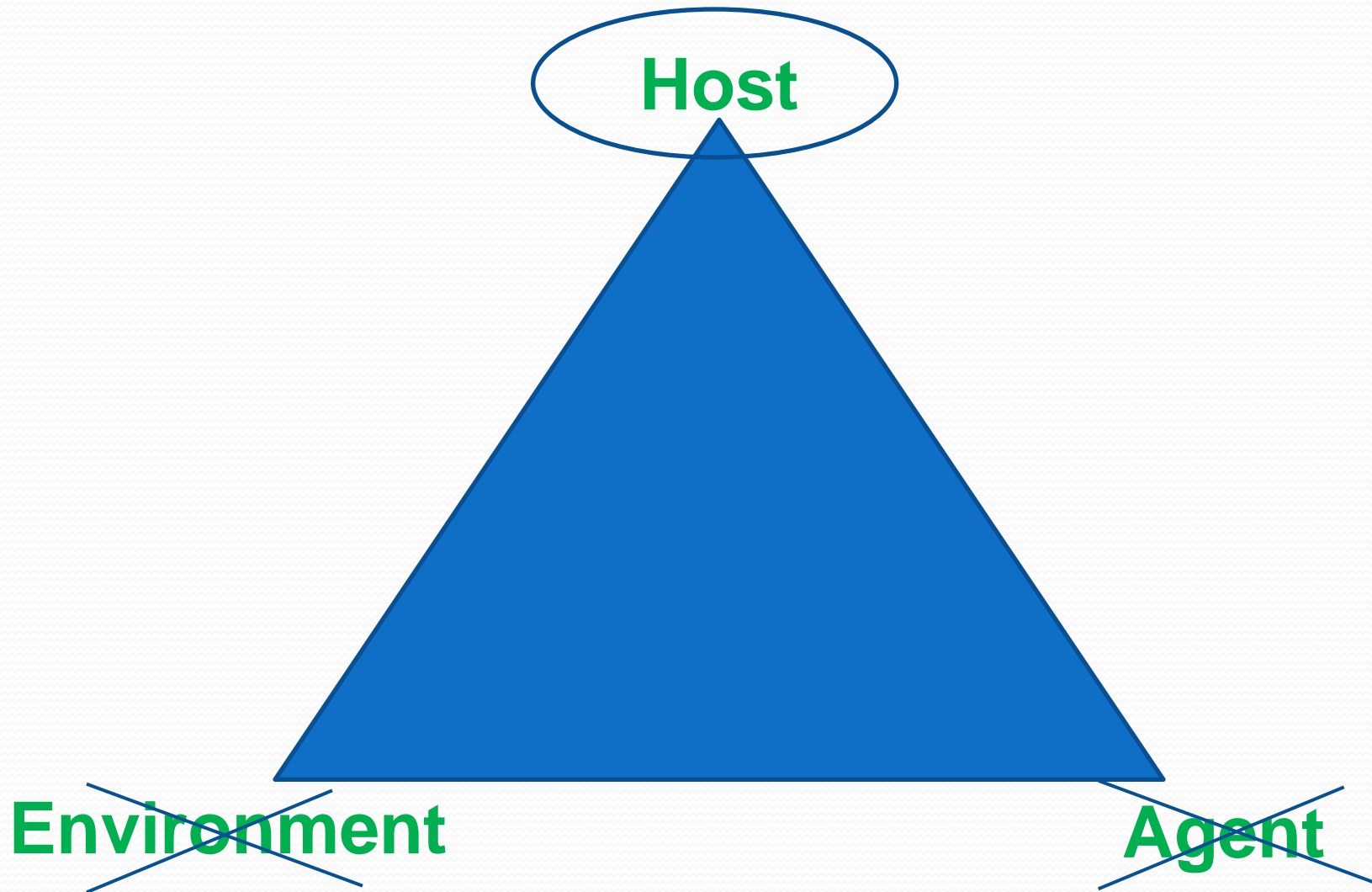
Non-Traditional Stakeholders



Barriers to Engagement



Paradigm Deficits





Individual-Level

Alcohol problems are **personal** and **internal**.

Attempt to change individual behavior.

Solutions focus solely on changing individuals while accepting the environment as a given.

Population-Level

Alcohol problems are the product of **systems**.

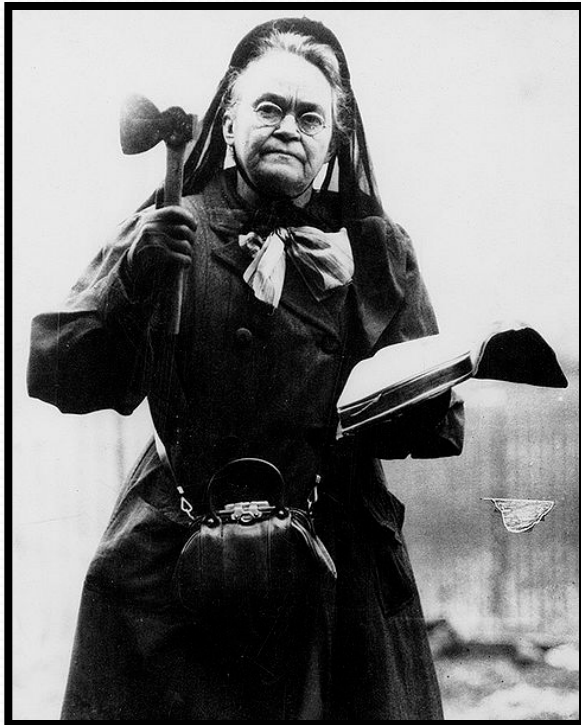
Engage in long-term, sustained change through policy solutions.

Solutions must address every level of the system, including the environments that shape decisions.

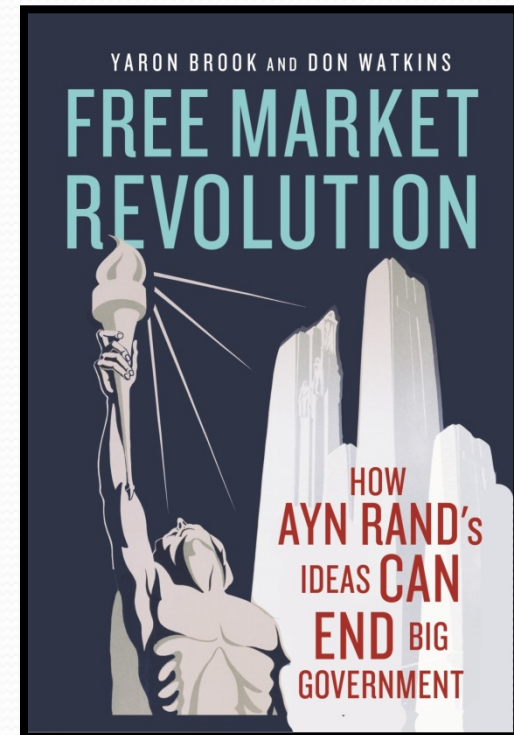
Alcohol Industry Issues Management Strategies

Polarizing the Debate (False Dichotomy)

“Neo-Prohibition”



Free Market
“Self-Regulation”





Bandwidth/Resource Limits



Organizing Gap

(courtesy of Michael Sparks, slide modified)

Considering Coalition Coordinator Resistance to Policy Work

Assumption: Capacity reduces resistance

Degree of
Resistance

Level of Capacity

Won't

Will

Lack of acceptance of population level model
Little comfort with conflict
Non-familiarity with political process
No interest in community organizing
Coalition member resistance

Understanding of population model
Familiarity with science
Policy campaign training
Practice with organizing skills
Familiarity with political process

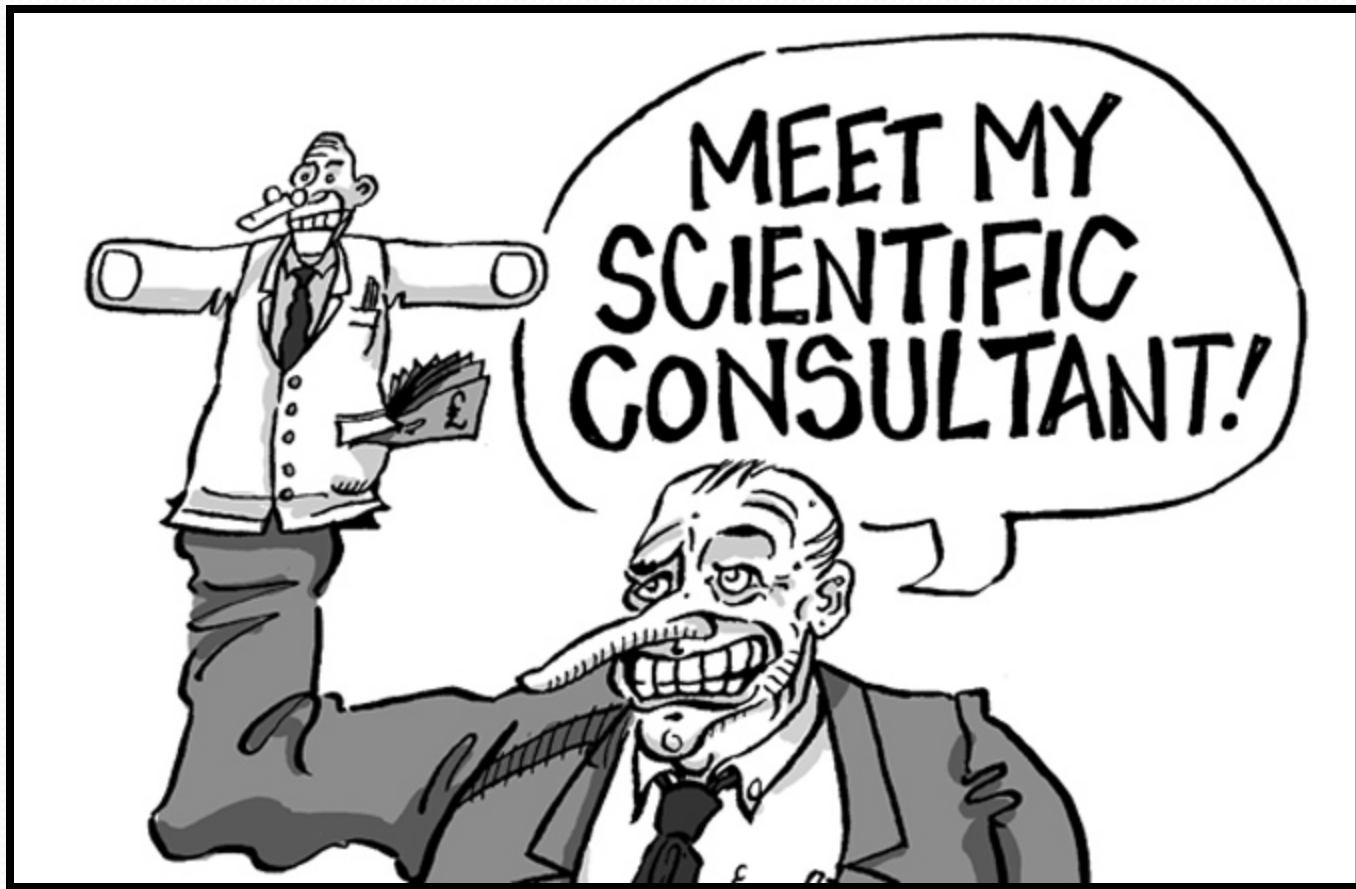
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Alcohol Industry Interference



And Finally . . .

**“A single bracelet
does not jingle.”**

African Proverb



Comments, Ideas, Questions:

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