



# Lessons for Leaders

Navigating the Process of Healthy Community Change

Active Living By Design (ALBD) creates community-led change by working with local, state and national partners to build a culture of active living and healthy eating. ALBD has consulted and collaborated with more than 160 local coalitions in 30 states, dozens of national partners and a variety of philanthropic organizations.

For more information, visit [www.activelivingbydesign.org](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org), connect with us on Facebook at [www.activelivingbydesign.org/facebook](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/facebook), or join us in the culture of health conversation on Twitter at [www.activelivingbydesign.org/twitter](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/twitter).

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# Introduction

Creating healthy communities for everyone is an ambitious, long-term pursuit centered on prevention as the most effective way to cultivate a healthy population. We know that health outcomes are affected by more than just genetics and access to care. Key factors also include health behaviors and an individual's interaction with place, community and culture. Many elements of a healthy community (e.g., public safety and access to healthy foods, physical activity, quality education, jobs, housing, clean air and water) are increasingly well understood, but they are not always accessible in all places or to all people. For this reason, healthy communities work involves changing systems to bring healthy community elements together and make them more equitably available across social groups. The scope and complexity of this work is why it is most commonly and effectively conducted by collaborative, multidisciplinary partnerships.

Active Living By Design (ALBD) created this resource for leaders of local, healthy community partnerships. Its purpose is to serve as a “mentor in print,” providing practical, field-tested strategic guidance to help leaders be more proactive and effective. We developed accessible lessons, principles and examples from the experiences and wisdom of many healthy community partnerships and their leaders. The core lessons:

- emerge directly from the practice of community partnerships and leaders with whom we have worked;
- are broadly applicable to healthy communities work regardless of strategy or community setting; and
- address strategic topics that could spark reflection and improve leaders' decisions.

ALBD has learned about the process of healthy community change over more than a decade of work. Established in 2002 as a national program office of the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation* (RWJF), ALBD has served more than a dozen funders and 160 partnerships across the country that are fostering community-led change, primarily to build a culture of active living and healthy eating.

In 2008, ALBD launched *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC), a five-year, \$33.4 million national program of RWJF whose primary goal was to implement healthy eating and active living initiatives that change both policies and environments that affect and support healthier communities for children and families across the United States. HKHC placed special emphasis on reaching children at highest risk for obesity on the basis of race, ethnicity, income and/or geographic location.

Through the program, RWJF sought to catalyze and support communities' efforts to address the root causes of childhood obesity through integrated changes in policies, norms, practices, social supports and the physical environment. HKHC supported 49 community partnerships across the country in a wide variety of contexts. Their experiences, along with those of other partnerships ALBD has worked with, inspired the broader lessons in this guide.

We identified four areas of learning with broad application to healthy communities: 1) community capacity building, 2) communication, 3) community engagement for equity and 4) advancing policy and systems change. Each category contains core lessons and related principles that provide tips and insights into the complexity and importance of the work. All of the categories, lessons and principles are mutually reinforcing.

Brief community examples from HKHC augment each lesson to help validate and put a face on the content. These represent just a small sample of accomplishments nationwide through HKHC and other healthy community initiatives. We also highlight some useful tools and resources that can deepen learning for anyone who is interested in supporting progress toward healthier communities.

We invite you to [contact us](#) for a conversation about the content in this guide or to share your stories from the field. Thank you for joining us in this legacy-building work!

# Community Capacity Building



## Lessons for Leaders:

Navigating the Process of Healthy  
Community Change

## Introduction

Lessons in Community Capacity Building

Lessons in Communication

Lessons in Community Engagement For Equity

Lessons in Advancing Policy/Systems Change

# Introduction

Working for sustainable, healthy community change is a heavy lift for any community. Given the complexity and rigorous requirements of systemic change, a community's capacity to meet this challenge is a strong predictor of success. For the purposes of this document, community capacity refers to the collective ability of people and community organizations to define, pursue and achieve their goals.

Communities with strong capacity have a combination of knowledge and skills, cohesion and commitment, structures and networks, and access to resources that support effective decision making and action over time. These kinds of communities are more likely to use assessments and evaluations to inform dialogue, develop strong constituencies and partners, and establish shared goals and distributed responsibility. They are generally better able to leverage resources, follow through on policy efforts and address institutional barriers. Communities with strong capacity can often identify and compete successfully for grants, and achieve results within short funding periods.

Communities with the greatest health challenges and disparities (e.g., rural communities or neighborhoods isolated by race, income, environmental justice concerns and/or a historical legacy of discrimination) may have less community capacity to address those issues. Despite strong leadership, knowledge and informal networks in many cases, these communities are more likely to have organizations with fewer professional training opportunities or internal support systems, more limited access to technology and fewer resources to sustain collective effort.

They often confront many pressing challenges, but with weaker connections to traditional avenues of influence or funding. They also may have less familiarity with policy or environmental approaches to health behavior, and a stronger orientation to programs and education. As a result, they are often not primed to pursue changes in policy, environments and systems as their first approach to community health improvement.

It is important to recognize a community's current level of capacity, account for its various assets and build from there. Even communities with less capacity very often have robust social and civic networks; leaders in both formal and informal settings; core institutions; and a range of effective strategies for mobilizing. They also have cultural strengths, physical or place-based assets, wisdom related to struggle, and shared history, achievements and meaning.

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It is important to recognize the community's current level of capacity, account for its various assets and build from there.

An array of activities and supports can complement these assets and strengthen communities' foundations for pursuing healthy community change. Some activities include building a common understanding of the issues residents seek to address, discussing the determinants of health, and thinking about residents' relationship to the community's history and current priorities. Supports for lower-capacity communities may also involve group education and training, action-oriented learning opportunities and network building with key organizations and potential agents of change. In the absence of this work, a focus on short-term, ambitious achievements may miss the

mark by overlooking the context and necessary groundwork to be laid.

Whatever capacity a community has, setting realistic expectations and focusing on capacity building is a good way to position it for success over the long term. Here are some core lessons and principles about capacity building we have gleaned from community partnerships.

## Lessons in Community Capacity Building

- **Identify and Cultivate Leadership**
- **Improve the Quality of Relationships**
- **Stay Flexible and Continuously Adapt**
- **Create Structure(s) and Multiple Paths to What You Value Most**
- **Use Careful Assessment to Engage and Build Leadership**
- **Share the Money and Opportunity**

# Identify and Cultivate Leadership

**Leadership is needed at multiple levels and should be recognized wherever it exists.** The most successful partnerships often combine elected, resident, community organization and public agency leadership with staff leadership and project management. Organizational and individual leadership can come from a wide variety of fields and settings. It is important for partnerships to recognize and develop the leadership that exists, even in informal and non-traditional places within a community, such as a street, garden or classroom, and then learn how to put it to use.

**Partnerships are more resilient when leadership is distributed and cultivated.** Elected officials, partners and staff may come and go during multi-year efforts. If not managed well, turnover can affect morale and hinder progress. The most resilient partnerships ensure that leadership, labor and institutional memory are well distributed and are supported in order to sustain their effort and changes made to improve policies and environments.

**Established leaders can transform into champions.** Healthy community partnerships often encounter elected officials, department leaders in local government, and other established leaders who are indifferent, lack awareness or motivation, or oppose helping advance a particular change. However, it is possible to win over these leaders with patient, persistent relationship building. As advocates demonstrate credibility, position others for credit, provide valued services or information and earn trust, they can find ways to involve skeptical leaders, address their concerns, solve some of their problems and soften their

position on issues. When a successful change is celebrated, it is not uncommon to hear initial opponents share the story and profess their intention to further champion the healthy communities cause.

**Facilitative leadership is indispensable.** Facilitative, reliable organizers who pay close attention to relationships, partnership dynamics, internal communication, shared resources and structures of accountability are very strongly associated with partnership productivity over time. Involving facilitative individuals as staff and committee chairs and finding them among partners is a good investment of effort.

**Facilitative leaders make room for emerging leaders.** Natural leaders in a community sometimes need a supportive space to demonstrate their capacity. When existing leaders step aside or remove barriers to participation, they provide opportunity for new leaders to share their abilities and enhance the partnership's productivity and sustainability.

**Good process prevents pseudo leaders from distorting the conversation.** Sometimes a community figure attempts to elevate himself/herself to the role of leader without a significant connection or commitment to a constituency. When an inauthentic leader speaks for the community or advances a personal vision or agenda, it can distort community ownership of the process if other stakeholders don't assert themselves. Facilitative leaders ensure that pseudo leaders do not dominate the process.

**Leaders benefit from strong learning networks.** Collaborative, multidisciplinary, multi-strategy approaches to community change are complex and new to many leaders. Leaders at all levels of experience and skill can be challenged by the rigors of the work. They need opportunities to learn, build skills and supportive relationships, access new resources, recharge their motivation, or simply remind themselves that they are part of something larger than their daily experience.

**Grassroots leaders grow when they are able to connect learning to action.** Residents, youth and other emerging grassroots leaders often benefit greatly from participation in applied learning activities (e.g., assessment, evaluation, conferences, advisory councils or presentations to elected bodies or funders) beyond the information they collect or specific skills they learn. Applied learning allows emerging leaders to increase their understanding of the issues and see how they connect to other challenges. They build relationships and increase their willingness to enter public debate and their ability to influence decisions. They learn to collaborate and deepen their commitment to the projects they undertake together. They see opportunity from a larger vantage point. And very often, they stay in the community and continue to contribute over time.

**Emerging leaders often do not see themselves as policy advocates.** Like many people, residents and other grassroots leaders may view health issues through the frame of individual responsibility and do not see the power of the environment to influence individual choice. They do not understand the policy-making process at first and may find it intimidating. This makes it difficult to see themselves as advocates for policy or environmental change. Resident leaders commonly seek the most direct, familiar and modest kind of support, such as an educational program or health promotion effort. The process of lifting their sights to more ambitious community change often occurs slowly as they are introduced to the importance of environments and policy with specific examples that demonstrate greater potential impact in the community. Sometimes it also occurs as their participation in a health-related program with inadequate facilities or funding sparks demand for improved facilities or a bigger budget allocation. Most often, they are encouraged and supported by a more experienced healthy-community advocate or peer who can help provide the information, training, context and opportunity to advance their interest in pursuing policy change.

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Facilitative leaders nurture emerging leaders with opportunities for applied learning.



## Community Examples

▲ Resident leaders do strategic planning in Rancho Cucamonga, CA.

### RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CA

The City of Rancho Cucamonga has institutionalized its Healthy RC initiative within the city manager's office with three facilitative outreach staff. Healthy RC has connected city leaders and officials to local, regional and national networks and provided capacity-building training and resources to stakeholders, including residents. It provides direct opportunities for open dialogue with city officials for low-income adult residents (via *Campeones para la Comunidad*) and youth (via Healthy RC Youth Leaders). Both groups have conducted assessments and directly engaged in healthy-policy change efforts, including the development of *The Road Map for a Healthy Future in Rancho Cucamonga*. For more information, please [read the full story](#).

### DESOTO, MARSHALL AND TATE COUNTIES, MS

Facilitated by the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, the *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC) partnership in Northwest Mississippi developed leadership and capacity in Desoto, Marshall and Tate counties. It established diverse partnerships in each county, and provided timely and customized seminars, trainings and technical assistance for various types of constituencies as part of a regional learning network. HKHC also supported community members' participation in local and regional health councils, the Mississippi Food Policy Council and in national initiatives such as *Let's Move! Cities, Towns and Counties*. Established leaders have become champions and won new policies and facilities. [Read the full story](#).

### CHATTANOOGA, TN

In Chattanooga, Step ONE facilitated a healthy community partnership named Grow Healthy Together Chattanooga with the purpose of including and lifting the voices of more community members and leaders in the East and South Chattanooga communities. Strong facilitative leadership from staff and technical assistance from partners helped to establish and provide varied training for two resident-led Leadership Advisory Councils. These councils developed priorities in each of the targeted communities and achieved many policy and environmental changes. [Read the full story](#).

# Improve the Quality of Relationships

## **Effective implementation of change requires relationships.**

When asked about what contributes to success, healthy community partnerships frequently highlight the quality of key relationships. Since this is true across phases of the work, any relationship considered “key” changes according to the strategy and context. Relationships that are most commonly highlighted are those between professional advocates, community residents/leaders (including youth, parents and elders), elected officials or key departmental staff in local governments or institutions. The value of relationship building is especially evident when it leads to a change of perception, trust or commitment of an effective change agent.

## **Building quality relationships often requires intention.**

Some methods for intentionally building relationships include community tours to directly experience the environment or community challenge in question and the people affected; peer-learning field trips that provide shared learning experiences and intensive time together; and joint participation in focus groups, *Photovoice* or another assessment that involves interpersonal exchange. Other ideas include joint travel to a professional conference; fun social opportunities related to the work or a common interest; or joint service on a work group to advance a project. Beyond methods, it is valuable for individuals to come to know, trust and value each other beyond the confines of a particular healthy community issue.

## **Strong relationships outside the community improve action and outcomes.**

Communities frequently benefit from supportive relationships outside the community. Whether it is for referral, peer learning, training or technical assistance, advocacy, consulting, coaching or fundraising, the ability to leverage resources beyond the community is an important success factor. A common and cost-efficient way for communities to reach out is by plugging into learning networks where they exist and are accessible. Effective learning networks provide venues for sharing and testing approaches across settings. In some cases, they offer leaders a broader vision of what is possible, based on successes from other communities. In other cases, they can influence the content of action plans, policy and program decisions, partnership composition, staff development, partner performance and/or resource development.

## **Receptivity and cultural competence are fundamental to supportive relationships.**

Resource providers from outside the community often need their own form of capacity building. Learning to work sensitively, respectfully and effectively across race, class and cultural difference in communities involves learning to listen, interpret, speak and write with an understanding of others’ cultural points of view. This capacity begins with awareness and often develops with training and over time. Productive learning relationships benefit greatly from it.

**Intentional work with funding partners is rewarding.** Many leaders go to funders only when they need money. They consider grantmaking guidelines to be opaque and assume the funder is either inaccessible or committed to their basic approach. However, funders need grantees to extend their impact, welcome thought partners to improve their practices, and often seek new models to test. Many funders have aspirations for their work, seize opportunities to learn more and see their investments in action, and frequently search for ways to contribute beyond grantmaking and appeal to their trustees. Leaders who seek creative ways to build their relationships with funders over time often find that they have access, influence and fundraising success that they did not initially expect. In the context of a network of deepening relationships, they may feel less pressure to say yes to funding opportunities or funding requests that have the potential to nudge them off course.

**Fun, fulfillment and recognition help fuel ongoing commitment.** Partnerships rarely have funds to pay for the contributions of all partners. People and the organizations they represent have to care about what they are doing, enjoy it and each other, and see the potential for mutual benefit in order to exercise consistent leadership over time. Therefore, it should be a fundamental practice to reflect on, recognize and reward partners who contribute.

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Learning to work effectively across differences in communities involves learning to listen, interpret and communicate with an understanding of others' cultural points of view.



## Community Examples

▲ Sam Robinson of Columbia, MO, asks Adolfo Hernandez of Chicago, IL, about authentic leadership at a learning network meeting.

### BUFFALO, NY

The Buffalo *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC) partnership has used a variety of methods to strengthen its relationships with city staff and community members. Examples include engaging them in direct experiences in the community; producing quality assessments and policy briefs that help them do their work; using targeted sessions and tours at policy summits; helping train community members to participate more effectively in city meetings and processes; offering youth and family sessions at public meetings; and sending elected officials to national conferences for inspiration, networking and fun. These relationships have boosted participation in the local Complete Streets coalition and food policy council and have improved policy implementation. [Read the full story.](#)

### OMAHA, NE

Live Well Omaha's (LWO) relationship building with new partners brought vital sources of energy and diverse perspectives that enabled it to evolve as a collaborative. Underlying the strong organizational ties were trusting, reciprocal bonds among key individuals who worked closely together. Over time, LWO also developed mutually supportive relationships with funders and leveraged meaningful connections with peers outside Omaha to launch new projects and refine approaches to local challenges.

[Read the full story.](#)

### KNOX COUNTY, TN

Knox County HKHC created opportunities for residents who emigrated from Burundi to share their eating traditions with African-American and Latino residents to build social ties and help address cultural misunderstandings in a neighborhood experiencing ethnic transition. It arranged access to a vacant gymnasium for the children of Guatemalan residents to address their concerns about safe places to play and build trust. When conflict threatened to strain relationships, they found a way to shift their focus in a productive way; build additional relationships, including with youth, at a local elementary school; and significantly advance their Safe Routes to School effort. [Read the full story.](#)

# Stay Flexible and Continuously Adapt

**Flexibility is a key success factor.** Leaders' and partners' ability and commitment to be flexible is vitally important. A partnership that is open to an indirect or different path in response to new information or changing conditions can conserve resources, seize new opportunities, tap new energy, strengthen relationships and position itself for greater long-term success. To avoid mission drift, leaders should be flexible within a reliable framework of shared values and priorities.

**People respond to what is most relevant.** Being relevant sometimes involves linking to more urgent opportunities in the community than healthy eating, active living or a particular health concern. Many communities with the highest need for greater access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity have other priorities they consider even more urgent. Some of these might include crime prevention, jobs and economic development, failed or closing schools, youth development, vacant properties or pollution. A healthy communities agenda can promote positive outcomes in all of these areas. Leaders who are able to listen to community priorities, frame the work for contribution to these priorities and establish a sense of reciprocity between interest groups often gain more traction than those who rigidly pursue their issue without regard to context.

**Timing is important for policy success.** The context in which policy change is contemplated is constantly changing as economic conditions rise and fall, the political pendulum swings during election cycles, new voices assert themselves and community priorities respond to current events and conditions. For instance, healthy community coalitions sometimes find it necessary to delay their policy agenda during tough financial times or to accommodate the need to reframe their issue. Delays may also provide time to build additional relationships or allow the community's attention to focus on issues that are more prominent in the short term. Conversely, sometimes advocacy efforts move faster when community events generate passion for a healthy community issue such as crime, traffic calming, failing infrastructure or a closed grocery store or school.

**Both progress and setbacks invite re-examination.** Major setbacks (e.g., staff or leadership turnover, loss of a key partner or funding, or unwelcome results of an election) can stimulate reflection and course correction within partnerships. Progress can do the same. Any shift within a system alters that system and can adjust perspectives about barriers and opportunities for future change. As emerging leaders taste success, additional partners become involved, projects succeed, a political constituency grows and resources increase, it becomes easier to imagine and pursue larger system changes than would have been possible before the work began. Continuous re-examination of capacity and momentum allows partnerships to see potential, think bigger and expand their ambition over time.



## Community Examples

- ▲ In Spartanburg County, SC, partners worked to connect parks to local trails and greenways.

### SPARTANBURG, SC

The departure of a key champion in the City of Woodruff (Spartanburg County) and subsequent dynamics made it difficult to gain agreements from all property owners along a proposed and popular greenway project, forcing the return of an important grant. Some partners regrouped and found two other sources of funds to advance a nearly mile-long section of the greenway, connecting a park and school with trailheads and parking at each end. They are also introducing health issues and supports into the city's new priority, a Main Street program.

*Read the full story.*

### JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL

Despite hard economic times, county bankruptcy and a state takeover of the public school system, the Health Action Partnership (HAP) in Jefferson County seized the opportunity generated by a Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant to hire new staff, restructure to formalize the roles of its members and create a new framework to increase its scope dramatically. After a tornado devastated communities throughout the county and the recovery effort strained leading partners' resources, HAP incorporated livable-community principles into local construction projects and used a federal TIGER grant to advance projects from the trail system master plan. *Read the full story.*

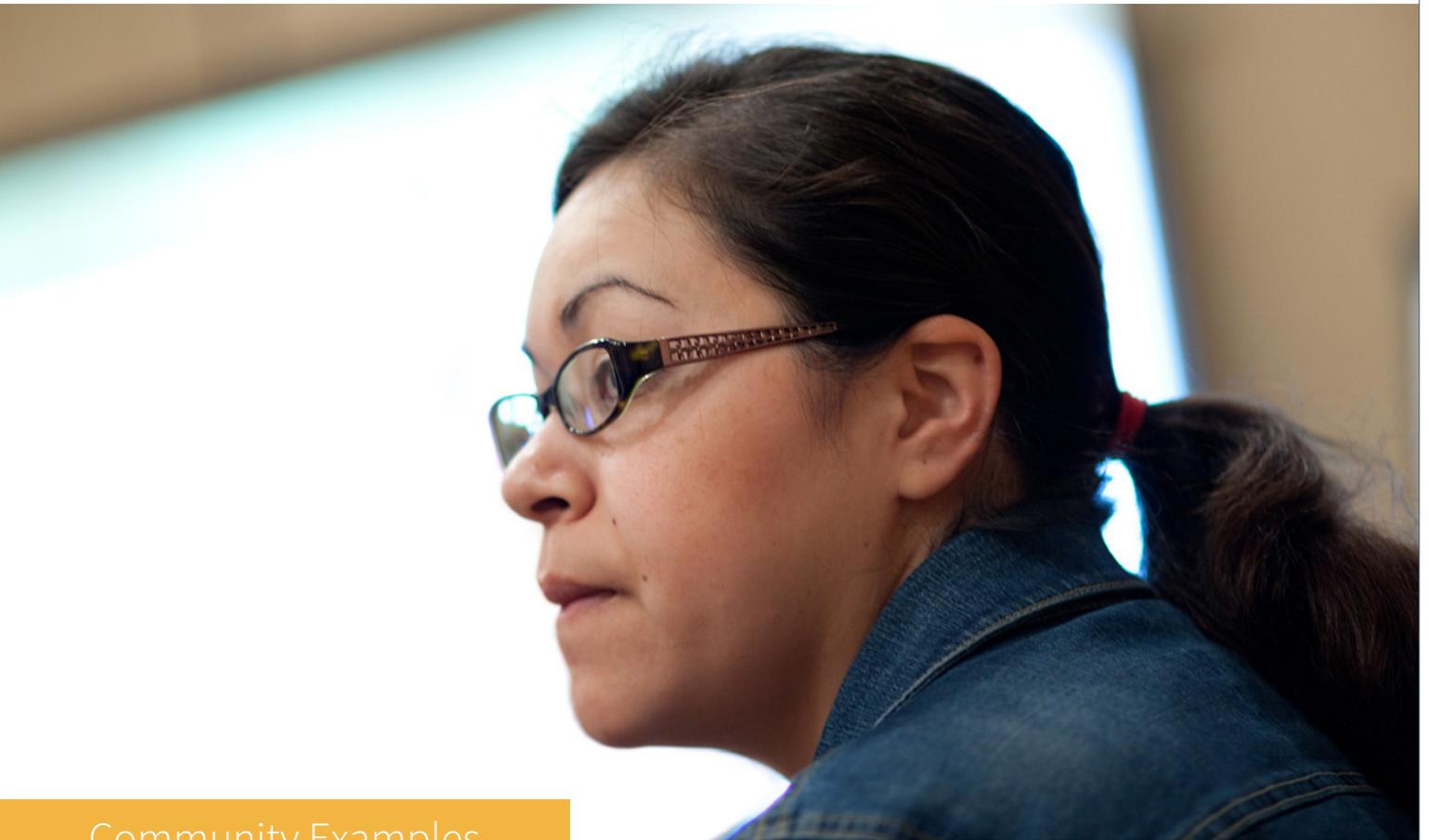
# Create Structure(s) and Multiple Paths to What You Value Most

**When establishing structures to support the work, it is useful to begin with the end in mind.** It is difficult for partnerships that retain one structure for doing the work to succeed across the range of challenges they will face. Successful partnerships and work groups let their priorities determine their structure, whether the priority is an overarching goal such as equity or sustainability or a core commitment such as community engagement or strategic communication.

**Equity deserves and requires multiple forms of support.** Equity is an important and humbling aspiration. The rigors of achieving health equity require extraordinary focus and effort from healthy community partnerships and leaders. Partnerships driven by white, middle-class leaders need to be even more attuned to equity challenges and opportunities. Short-cut solutions, such as inviting “representative” partners or establishing a separate committee addressing equity, don’t work and can even damage relationships and credibility when they are perceived as insincere. Success is difficult and not guaranteed even with well-intentioned attempts by sincere leaders to hire community organizers that support healthy community partnerships in low-income neighborhoods, or to include resident leaders on all action teams, or to train and use paid “*promotoras*” to conduct assessment, education, recruitment and mobilization efforts. This is because multiple barriers and constraints to ongoing participation sometimes make execution difficult. Partnerships with a strong commitment to equity can benefit

from additional structural supports as well, such as an equity charter to guide all goals, strategies, measures and decisions; a leadership-training curriculum and learning network for emerging resident leaders; or an action-oriented youth council with training for adult partners. Whatever the specific combination of resources for equity, a robust combination with structural support is advisable.

**Sustainability involves much more than new grants.** Partnerships that see sustainability as a broad-based effort to embed change in the community are often more successful at continuing the change process and increasing their impact. Such an effort involves intentionally building capacity and increasing impact for healthy community change along social, environmental, policy and economic spectrums of the work. It could also involve promoting key allies to influential positions, electing them to public office, or creating a permanent staff position within a key agency or institution. It could mean building a new health-promoting facility with a good maintenance budget, winning a new policy or establishing a permanent advisory council. It could also mean a dedicated funding stream or funder consortium to advance a strategy or initiative, or any other combination of supports that deepen change and increase impact over time. Whatever the specific mix of priorities and pathways, it is useful to pursue sustainability along multiple paths and experience the kinds of interim success that provide confidence, momentum and power for the future.



## Community Examples

- ▲ Rocio Muñoz engages low-income and Spanish speaking residents in healthy advocacy as coordinator of the Creciendo en Salud program in Benton County, OR.

### SOMERVILLE, MA

Shape Up Somerville pursued greater engagement of immigrants and youth by creating structured initiatives with established community partners who serve these groups, and by supporting them with contracts to support their time and help build their capacity. In addition to accomplishing its engagement goals, this approach resulted in increased support for a mobile farmers' market, created a health and civic engagement ESL curriculum, improved park design and established new systems within city government to contract with community-based organizations in the future. [Read the full story.](#)

### BENTON COUNTY, OR

Benton County's Creciendo en Salud (CeS) initiative, which translates to "growing in health," improved engagement of low-income and Latino residents by creating a Health Equity Alliance. The health department established a network of county-funded health navigators who provide leadership training and advocacy opportunities for disenfranchised residents. Their experience led to the Corvallis City Council's Public Participation Task Force, which is revising the city's current processes and structures into a more effective, inclusive, and efficient community engagement program. CeS also helped Corvallis Parks and Recreation to better reach low-income families. [Read the full story.](#)

# Use Careful Assessment to Engage and Build Leadership

## **Multiple methods of assessment are required to understand the community context.**

Healthy community approaches are more challenging than health programs. They require an understanding of the target population and its needs, habits and preferences; specific environmental conditions; the community context; the existing policy status and political context; and the dynamics of the partnership itself. Partnerships that don't learn about these things on the front end often find themselves challenged and needing to learn about them later. Successful partnerships employ a range of assessment techniques (e.g., analysis of pre-existing health and community data, surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, environmental audits, policy audits, Photovoice and partnership evaluations) in order to understand the challenges and opportunities they have before making important decisions about their direction.

## **Good assessment builds capacity and is worth the time.**

Thoughtful assessment does more than collect information for analysis and decision making. It involves partners, identifies gaps in the partnership and provides opportunities to recruit new partners. It builds the skills, knowledge and confidence of emerging leaders. It forges relationships and builds networks for advocacy and implementation. It establishes a culture of preparation and accountability. It opens avenues for dialogue and stimulates interest in the community, builds credibility with funders and political supporters, and unearths challenges and assets within the partnership. It also conserves resources by informing decisions and reducing risk. These benefits increase the partnership's and community's capacity to succeed. While partners and funders are sometimes anxious to move past assessment and planning to action, those who are able to invest time and money in thoughtful assessment often find that it pays long-term dividends.

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Careful assessment builds capacity,  
improves decisions, conserves  
resources and enhances credibility.



## Community Examples

- ▲ Members of the KEYS Youth Council in Charleston, WV, helped assess all the city parks, presented recommendations to city officials and built confidence and new skills.

### DENVER, CO

Through a diverse array of assessment projects and deployment of 10 promotoras, Denver's *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* partnership trained emerging resident leaders, built new networks of relationships, increased meeting attendance and participation, and unearthed new problem-solving methods. Efforts to support inclusive decision making and build relationships with agency partners secured powerful results in the city's south-west neighborhoods, particularly in parks and urban agriculture. The partnership influenced timing, design and investment in plans, policies and capital projects. [Read the full story.](#)

### CHARLESTON, WV

Partners in the KEYS 4 HealthyKids (KEYS) initiative in Charleston conducted a variety of assessment activities that ultimately built a deeper understanding of health issues among community members and leaders, sparked a public dialogue about obesity as more than solely a medical concern, and developed new skills and confidence among youth. The KEYS Youth Council assessed city parks, developed recommendations for the city council's parks and recreation committee, and influenced the Charleston Parks Department's prioritization of park maintenance and capital improvements. [Read the full story.](#)

# Share the Money and Opportunity

## **Lead agencies sometimes have blind spots related to investing in the capacity of others.**

In cases where an agency receives a significant or multi-year grant to lead a healthy community initiative in a low-income community, the agency's use of funds can signal to the community and potential partners who and what it values. It can also determine who is able to participate and at what level. Nonprofits and government agencies alike struggle with funding and have strong incentives to keep the money they raised. But they sometimes lose objectivity about where capacity may be needed most within a broader partnership and how others view them. There is often a large difference in basic, day-to-day security, resources, time and quality-of-life between white-collar, institutional partners with secure jobs and community partners struggling to keep fragile enterprises going or who are challenged by low-paid work and fewer choices to support their families. Leaders who can acknowledge and help bridge this gap by investing resources where greater engagement and capacity are truly needed increase the likelihood that their partnerships will thrive.

## **Money and in-kind support are important and flexible engagement tools for equity.**

An important part of putting equity in practice is providing people with the support they need in order to have an equal opportunity to contribute and benefit. When money is available, a partnership can increase and improve partner engagement and build overall capacity dramatically through distribution of resources. This may include providing mini grants to small organizations, contracts for important products and services, stipends to support the time of valued residents who are volunteering outside their jobs, food at meetings, and assistance with transportation, childcare and other routine expenses for those who need it.

## **Learning and leadership opportunities are valuable capacity investments to distribute.**

Leaders of partnerships sometimes get the opportunity to participate in learning networks, make presentations, attend conferences, join advisory committees, pitch to a new funder or assist other communities. These are important opportunities to develop and distribute leadership, deepen relationships, build knowledge and skills, and expand professional networks. Leaders who look beyond paid staff and offer these opportunities to key partners and residents are planting seeds for the future. They are often rewarded, sometimes immediately, with a stronger, more productive and sustainable partnership.

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An agency's use of funds can signal to the community and potential partners who and what it values.



## Community Examples

### MILWAUKEE, WI

Led by United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee (UNCOM), the Milwaukee Childhood Obesity Prevention Project shared resources intentionally to build capacity and momentum toward its goals. It funded 10 demonstration projects in partnering agencies and invited partners to participate in listening sessions, recognition ceremonies and community-wide physical activity events. UNCOM shared grant funding with the Next Door Foundation and Neu-Life Community Development to support youth-centered capacity building and healthy eating initiatives. [Read the full story.](#)

### WASHINGTON, DC

The Summit Health Institute for Research and Education (SHIRE) contracted with DC Hunger Solutions to advocate for increased funding for after-school meals and with Groundwork Anacostia River DC to advocate for funding of a Park Rangers pilot program. SHIRE supported partners to attend national *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* grantee meetings and provided scholarships for Ward 7 and 8 residents to participate in a local conference as part of its commitment to developing leaders. [Read the full story.](#)

# Communication



## Lessons for Leaders:

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# Introduction

Significant, lasting change requires sustained intention by a diverse array of partners and the ability to resonate with the values and worldviews of those needing to be involved and persuaded to action. Meeting this challenge requires much more than traditional forms of communication, such as newsletters, reports or brochures. It requires strategic communication—the kind of well-planned, purposeful and reciprocal efforts that can realize the potential of partnerships by building quality relationships, mutual understanding, shared commitment and action.

Communities are complex. Even with a clear purpose and effective methods, it can be challenging to recruit and motivate partners with a single priority or message. People have their own lived experiences and priorities. Fortunately, healthy community change can address a broad

array of issues and priorities, especially when conversations are conducted with an open mind that seeks opportunity and common interest.

An additional part of the challenge is to identify the deep cultural habits of thought and expectation (i.e., frames) held by both allies of change and defenders of the status quo, understand one's own frames and create consistent messages that resonate with people at that level. Effective communication is a central part of the long-term success of healthy community partnerships because it is so essential to facilitative leadership, capacity building and effective advocacy.

And it is not easy! Here are some of the core lessons and principles about communication we have gleaned from community partnerships.

## Lessons in Communication

- **Communicate and Connect With Strategic Intention**
- **Highlight Benefits That Resonate Broadly**
- **(Re)Set How Issues Are Framed**

# Communicate and Connect With Strategic Intention

**Communication supports the sustained, shared intention required for big change.**

Change that challenges the status quo requires strong and sustained intention. Advancing significant challenges such as equity or systems change requires clear intention, shared beyond the affected community to the range of stakeholders needed to drive change, working through adjustments and sustaining the change over time.

**Effective communication is proactive, comprehensive and strategic.** Too many partnership leaders think about communication as media (traditional and social), meeting minutes and newsletters. Strategic communication takes planning and messaging based on clear purpose, knowledge of the audience(s) and desired action(s). While it takes time, this proactive investment supports both the internal functioning of partnerships as well as project strategy and external relations.

**Effective communication is often multi-directional and reciprocal.** Partnership leaders often communicate with groups or support the communication of others. Reciprocal communication that emphasizes listening and learning is an indispensable habit of facilitative leadership and partnership. It increases the value and impact of all communications, builds understanding and trust, and strengthens working bonds at all levels, across all settings and with all kinds of people.

**Strategic communication supports diverse working relationships and teamwork.** Successful partnerships build purposeful and authentic relationships across and among all levels and stakeholder groups. Strategic communication is a critical support to the kind of relationship building that capitalizes on diversity. It helps to connect and inform partners; bridge gaps in understanding; establish common commitments; build trust, reciprocity and accountability; validate decisions and enable teamwork. When the work occurs in multi-lingual communities, language justice can be an important consideration for realizing the potential of strategic communication.

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Strategic communication supports the kind of strong and sustained intention and teamwork that is required for changing the status quo.



## Community Examples

### ROCHESTER, NY

Collaborative strategic planning helped shape Rochester's Healthi Kids initiative and proactive, sustained communication advanced its policy campaigns. The partnership intentionally created multiple avenues for honest and constructive exchange with residents and partners, used a student-made video and an equity frame to motivate parents and policy makers to improve school food across the city, and used an online software platform to produce advocacy alerts. These approaches helped propel successful policy campaigns for zoning changes, a school recess policy, long-range transportation planning, a Complete Streets policy and other healthy community priorities. For more information, please [read the full story](#).

### GREENVILLE, SC

As part of a rebranding process, LiveWell Greenville (LWG) held a retreat with diverse stakeholders to develop a strategic action plan for the county. LWG conducted multidirectional communication across eight work groups, provided strategy-specific capacity-building training to community members and stakeholders, and communicated progress through a website, social media outlets, e-digests, and presentations as well as more traditional media. LWG's most effective communications and advocacy approach was to highlight the work of its many diverse partners. [Read the full story](#).

# Highlight Benefits That Resonate Broadly

**Many community change initiatives can and should be about more than one priority.**

Approaching potential partners inflexibly with only one health priority is rarely an effective approach. Partners and residents often have other more urgent issues as a result of their lived experiences. It can be useful to relate healthy communities work to these concerns as much as possible.

**A flexible healthy community frame can bring people together.**

Comprehensive approaches to healthy eating and active living initiatives can support much larger change than just one community challenge or measure. For example, in addition to addressing obesity and related diseases, healthy eating and active living initiatives can address issues such as social and health equity, educational success, economic development, air quality, safety, community revitalization, environmental justice and responses to climate change. Openness to other priorities, and framing issues with a broader health or equity lens, creates opportunities for engaging new partners, building consensus and setting common agendas. Similarly, accepting (or even adopting) the values and terminology

of partners working on the same issues can build a coalition's momentum. For example, advocates who prefer to speak of "livable," "just," "vibrant" or "resilient" communities, or "communities of opportunity," can be just as effective as those who insist on speaking of "healthy" ones.

**Openness to multiple frames or broader frames such as equity provides greater opportunity to focus on root causes and sustain a movement.**

It broadens the potential impact over time by building understanding of upstream or root causes of multiple health challenges and inequities, and helping identify solutions that solve multiple problems. The flexible partnerships formed today offer the kind of leadership and structures that can help communities address a variety of health and equity challenges in the future.

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Openness to other priorities, and framing issues with a broader health or equity lens, creates opportunities for engaging new partners, building consensus and setting common agendas.



## Community Examples

- ▲ Copper Country HKHC in Houghton County, MI, built support for a Complete Streets ordinance based on livability, economic development, health, safety and enhanced availability of public funds.

### KANE COUNTY, IL

Kane County branded its integrated suite of health-oriented, long-range plans as “Quality of Kane” and used terms such as “promise,” “prosperity,” “quality of life” and “for everyone.” It successfully promoted Illinois’ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program redemption at new farmers’ markets and a farmland protection ordinance for rural economic development opportunities. A flexible frame helped the Kane County Fit for Kids initiative thrive even through the loss of its initial leadership and a significant post-election change in the county board.

[Read the full story.](#)

### HOUGHTON COUNTY, MI

The Copper Country *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* partnership in Houghton County built support among residents and elected officials for a Complete Streets ordinance and other active transportation projects by focusing on livability, economic development, health, safety and future funding opportunities from the Michigan Department of Transportation. [Read the full story.](#)

## (Re)Set How Issues Are Framed

**Existing frames resist change.** Healthy community partnerships often must address strongly held beliefs or perceptions of reality that challenge the progress of their agenda. This can happen at any level of the work. Healthy community approaches rely on an understanding that environments and systems influence health behavior and that the social determinants of health influence health outcomes. Yet strong existing frames and mental models define and support the status quo. They need to be identified and consistently challenged.

**Unaddressed concepts of individualism and limited government can discourage community action for change.** Resident leaders, community stakeholders, professionals from various disciplines and elected officials can all potentially hold an unchallenged belief that health is an individual responsibility and that change must focus only on health promotion. This belief can make it difficult for them to appreciate the role of policy, environments and culture in supporting healthy behavior and community-wide health and to see their place in making such changes. Individualism also encourages most people to think of equity in terms of interpersonal fairness and to not acknowledge the patterns of structural racism, spatial disadvantage, income inequality or other

social determinants that affect health. In some places, residents, elected officials or powerful institutional stakeholders can hold a belief that government is ineffective or untrustworthy. This can make it difficult for them to support the policy approaches, or governmental investment and reform, required to build healthier communities. Recognizing these existing frames is an important first step to developing carefully crafted, consistent messages that can promote productive dialogue.

**Specialized professional disciplines also have different priorities and blind spots to health in their training.** Each profession also has its own perspective that influences its priorities and level of openness to certain kinds of change. For example, a traffic engineer, whose training is centered on moving automobiles quickly with less regard to other users of the road, may not initially embrace planning or facilities that support pedestrians or bicyclists. Likewise, a nutritionist or recreation supervisor trained to deliver educational information or run activities may tend to see healthy eating or physical activity only as a programming issue. Productive partnership with these professionals requires the ability to recognize and help broaden these points of view.

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Individualism encourages people to think of equity in terms of interpersonal fairness and to not acknowledge patterns of structural racism, spatial disadvantage, income inequality and other social determinants that affect health.



## Community Examples

### **NASH AND EDGECOMBE COUNTIES, NC**

While remaining consistent with its mission, the Down East Partnership for Children in Nash and Edgecombe counties shifted the frame of its work from educational and social supports for young children and their families to healthy communities. It used established networks and approaches to introduce new ideas about healthy policy and environmental changes, carefully assessed readiness for change among partners and showed people how they could implement the work in their own environments. *Read the full story.*

### **HAMILTON COUNTY, OH**

The We THRIVE! initiative in Hamilton County supported a broad-based shift from individual-focused public health messages and programs to a healthy community approach that addressed environments, policies and systems (PSE). It helped resident leaders, professionals, elected officials and other stakeholders understand their role and engage in a new movement for change by providing an organizational umbrella, hosting an influential luncheon, conducting educational tours and launching a strategic communications campaign to demonstrate how PSE changes could work for local communities and families. *Read the full story.*

# Community Engagement for Equity



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Engaging a community for any sustained effort can be challenging. The challenges increase when the goal is health equity and the approach is as multifaceted as healthy community change. Disadvantaged communities often contend with their need to involve external partners and attract external resources, even as internal stakeholders are challenged to support their families and find available time and energy for ongoing citizen action.

Leaders from disadvantaged communities are sometimes approached by well-intentioned partners who bring money, skills, knowledge and networks. While these assets can be constructive if deployed in the right way, local leaders often have to confront outside agendas, priorities and timelines, significant power imbalances and dismissive assumptions about their leadership and assets. For healthy community partnerships that are interested in equity, the primary challenges of community engagement in this context are to be authentic, patient and intentional enough to shift power and achieve lasting impact.

Successful engagement often begins by acknowledging the assets and leadership that already exist and the facilitative orientation and skill needed to capitalize fully on diversity and existing strengths. It also involves working artfully with the inevitable tension that exists when diverse interests are present, arrangements are not fair, the status quo is embedded, and people are uncomfortable. It means keeping partners motivated and working together over time, even after a success invites more struggle, to bring the new vision closer to fruition. For lasting change, community engagement must also build community capacity and quality relationships between partners, and lift leaders inside and outside the community to new levels of effectiveness. Successful engagement motivates and organizes a constituency to increase accountability and promote and defend equitable change.

## Lessons in Community Engagement for Equity

- **Engage Diverse Stakeholders Within the Community**
- **Engage Youth**
- **Embrace Creative Tension**
- **Be Patient and Shift Power to Achieve Equity**

The effort involved in this kind of community engagement is worthwhile because it is the only way to transform the embedded values and structures of the status quo, build the capacity of disadvantaged communities to hold the system accountable, and secure lasting progress on health equity. It also increases the impact of community changes as residents, including youth, come to own, value and act on what they and their friends have worked so hard to win. As those close to the change

process communicate their excitement and pride in their achievements, they motivate their own circles of influence to celebrate and take advantage of new opportunities. Put more concisely, “If *they* build it, they will come.” And a healthier community and culture can be one of the results.

Here are some core lessons and principles about community engagement we have learned from community partnerships.

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Successful engagement involves working artfully with the inevitable tension that exists when diverse interests are present, arrangements are not fair, the status quo is embedded and people are uncomfortable.

# Engage Diverse Stakeholders Within the Community

## **Diverse stakeholder involvement is necessary.**

Traditional community outreach through mailers, meetings and hearings are familiar and relatively easy, but they are passive and often ineffective at engaging a representative range of stakeholders. Despite the extra effort involved, diverse community voices can help any partnership see challenges and opportunities more clearly, reach a broader cross section of the community and engage community interests more effectively. For partnerships led by organizations outside of the community, diverse stakeholder involvement is also a basic practice for establishing credibility. Where healthier behavior and health equity are the focus and human capital is the primary resource, communities benefit by taking full advantage of the diversity in the room.

**Diversity is not inclusion.** Diversity encompasses the full range of how people differ (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class and/or culture), and it is an important component for partnerships aiming to serve the interests of the whole community. Inclusion is the leveraging of that resource to ensure maximum use of what diverse partners can offer to the work. Partnerships that build inclusive structures, processes and relationships cultivate distributed leadership and more equitably distributed decision-making power. They are generally more trusted, resilient to change, deeply embedded in community life and sustainable over time.

## **Authentic community engagement is an intentional, ongoing process of shifting the balance of initiative, control and power to the community.**

Residents know the difference between true engagement and something designed for show. They can rise to the occasion when sincere efforts address their most urgent and important needs. Processes that acknowledge and create pathways for community leadership and networks are better able to achieve full participation in decision making and greater ownership of the work.

## **Community visioning can be an effective engagement process on multiple levels.**

When a range of stakeholders, including a diversity of residents, are included early in a well-facilitated process for developing a shared vision and understanding of challenges and priorities, many strategic goals can be advanced at once. Benefits of a quality visioning process include shared knowledge and understanding; more and stronger relationships within the partnership; a broadly shared vision; more refined strategies with increased confidence and commitment behind them; more distributed leadership and decision making; more careful attention to equity; and a richer base of information to inform strategic communication.

**When an outside agency positions itself to engage a “high-need” community, it is important for all parties to slow down and pay close attention to relationships.**

In communities long held back by poverty, structural racism and other deep forms of institutionalized inequity, the number, strength and capacity of community organizations may be low. Individual leaders in these communities may have difficulty gaining the attention and confidence of funders who have their own networks, assumptions and patterns of investment. Agencies with greater

access to funding due to their relationships, history of work, grantwriting ability or access to information about upcoming opportunities often position themselves to serve as a lead agency for a partnership intending to involve the community. If the agency has not built a network of quality relationships in the community, it is beneficial for all stakeholders to invest the time and effort it takes to establish trusting and reciprocal relationships and to engage residents authentically in the partnership before establishing a specific agenda.

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Diverse community voices can help any partnership see challenges and opportunities more clearly and engage community interests more completely and effectively.



## Community Examples

- ▲ The Fun 'n FITchburg initiative formally engages community members through assessment, youth peer leaders and the city's Adopt-A-Park program.

### BALDWIN PARK, CA

Baldwin Park moved beyond an informed community engagement model to authentic collaboration and sustainable resident empowerment through People on the Move, a multilingual, multicultural initiative that trains resident leaders to become content experts and to shepherd each healthy community strategy and/or policy from inception to implementation. As a result, the city has changed the way it involves residents in policy making. For more information, please [read the full story](#).

### FITCHBURG, MA

Fun 'n FITchburg capitalized on Fitchburg's diversity by creating the 50-member Community Mobilization Network. It trained and involved eight youth peer leaders from three low-income priority neighborhoods and trained and paid bilingual, bicultural adult resident mobilizers to increase participation in public housing and low-income neighborhoods. Their work on the city's Adopt-A-Park program resulted in formal adoption of 16 Fitchburg parks, among other successes. [Read the full story](#).

# Engage Youth

**It is appropriate and productive to include youth in healthy community change initiatives.** Youth involvement in partnerships is an important part of ensuring that those impacted by decisions are engaged in shaping them. Young people have a direct and even disproportionate stake in many preventable health challenges. Especially on issues that affect them, youth can serve as an integral resource for reaching more deeply into their communities and bringing fresh perspectives and approaches to the work. Like their historical counterparts in other social movements, many young people are exploring issues of social justice, experimenting with their own principles and political ideas and are highly motivated toward action. Feeling empowered in their relationships with adults and with leaders and organizations around them helps youth thrive and contribute to the community in the future.

**Young people can have positive effects on adults, organizations and communities.** Youth can profoundly influence adults with their fresh perspectives, voices and culture. From parents in the home to professionals at work and elected officials in city hall, people pay attention when informed, prepared youth speak about community issues and how they are affected. This better equips adults to be facilitative leaders and provides an important alternative perspective that can influence outcomes. Youth can provide quality assessments (audits and surveys), communications support (video and social media) and effective advocacy (advisory committees and public meetings). They can also reinvigorate partnerships and committees by supplying higher levels of interaction, creativity, action orientation and fun.

**When well supported to participate in meaningful community change, young people develop skills, critical awareness and an ethic of community contribution.** Involving youth offers them opportunities to develop an array of skills and become problem solvers and decision makers. It also provides a platform for affirmation, achievement and confidence building. Through the advocacy process, they can gain the information and resources necessary to analyze issues that affect their lives, environments and communities. They learn how to effectively make decisions, positively interact with their peers, manage resources, strategize on ways to make change and act as community advocates. As they assert themselves, they learn about community dynamics, power, citizenship and themselves.

**Adult partners should be intentional and committed to providing quality, youth-centered empowerment.** Youth need consistent support to thrive as health advocates, yet many adults are unprepared or are not committed to offer it. Serving youth is not the same as engaging youth. Many communities have organizations and/or professionals with experience in youth empowerment—not just service delivery. They offer training in areas such as public speaking, media literacy, community assessment, gathering community support, working with policy makers, issue education and logistical support. In order to provide regular and active support throughout the community-change process, these professionals need resources. Another part of supporting youth involvement is supplying a venue for them to convene with each other and ensuring both youth and adults are well prepared when youth integrate with ongoing adult work groups.



## Community Examples

▲ Jóvenes SANOS in Watsonville and Pajaro Valley, CA, trains youth as advocates.

### WATSONVILLE AND PAJARO VALLEY, CA

Jóvenes SANOS, a youth leadership and advocacy group in Watsonville and Pajaro Valley, prepared grassroots advocates by combining advance training and real-time opportunities for youth to advocate for equitable and culturally relevant healthy eating options in Watsonville and Santa Cruz, and the Greater Watsonville Master Bike Plan. The Jóvenes SANOS leaders influenced adults and peers to create and shape a healthy culture in their community. [Read the full story.](#)

### LOUISVILLE, KY

Youth became a critical part of healthy community advocacy efforts in Louisville. Youth from several neighborhoods used surveys, Photovoice and digital storytelling to advocate for change with metro council members and city officials. Working with the local YMCA, they launched Metro Youth Advocates (MYA). Youth contributed to the establishment of several Healthy in a Hurry corner stores in food desert neighborhoods, the hiring of a young person as a produce manager to support the stores and the confirmation of Louisville as host of the 2014 Southern Obesity Summit. Youth remain involved in their community after their participation in MYA. [Read the full story.](#)

# Embrace Creative Tension

## **Diversity can heighten creative tension.**

As partnerships include stakeholders across diverse disciplines, geographies, cultural identities, perspectives and power bases, there frequently can be tension as various voices seek to express their points of view, interests and expectations. Tension can also exist when professionals from different disciplines struggle to learn each other's languages, concepts and strengths. Tension is often greatest with efforts to bridge differences across age, race, class and culture. Important aspects of inclusion, such as language justice, dialogue about structural racism or other "isms," power and other issues of multiculturalism, can—and should—slow down a process. This has the potential to create annoyance among those who may not appreciate the need, who may not feel safe from judgment or who may prioritize values such as predictability or adherence to a funder's timeline. These forms of tension can be characterized as "creative tension" if expression is in honest pursuit of a shared vision. Partnerships that openly and effectively manage this tension are often better prepared to advance health equity.

## **Where you stand depends on where you sit.**

Partners often come to the table with their own priorities, history and experience. Some carry deep mistrust of outsiders or government. Others may have a specific agenda, a very particular skill to offer or the need to check in with a larger group they are representing. Some may have a need for services or seek agency funding. Whatever one's perspective, it is important to agree on a process for setting group priorities and addressing tension that may exist among partners. Sometimes the process involves setting aside or delaying what an individual or

organization would prefer. Sometimes it means providing financial support for an individual or voicing support for an organization's project. Or it may require taking more time for dialogue and conflict resolution before making decisions. Patience and flexibility are often easier for organizations and individuals with more resources, who are better positioned to benefit, more trusting of or influential over the process, or more strongly focused on the partnership's overall vision and agenda. It is helpful to be aware of how each partner's context influences his or her positions and contributions.

## **Examining who benefits from set priorities provides insight and highlights equity.**

When partnerships seek to set priorities that are actionable and have a good chance of short-term success, it can be tempting to select goals that are politically easier and avoid addressing the challenge of equity. Some priority-setting temptations can seem quite reasonable, such as aligning with the agendas of more influential partners or selecting goals that already have well-positioned champions like a mayor or council member, or those that do not stimulate the vigorous opposition of powerful interests such as the business community. Choosing more likely winners, avoiding difficult conversations to build positive relationships and quietly trying to build momentum with small wins are useful tactics if they are in service to the partnership's vision and values. Therefore, it is important for equity-oriented partnerships to determine whether a given choice is bending toward equity and, if so, embrace any tensions that come with it. True inclusion of those most affected helps keep these decisions accountable.

**Change is difficult and often resisted by those charged with following through.**

Even positive change can land as a burden on those responsible for implementation. Policy and systems change often require significant retraining and more effort to build colleagues' commitment to act according to new rules and standards that challenge traditional ideology and practice. It also requires managers to address disincentives at various levels of an organization. Many of these things can put people outside of their comfort zones, leave them feeling

less competent, occur without recognition or additional resources, and meet with mixed results over a prolonged period until a truly different system emerges. No wonder there can be resistance! Buy-in is critical for achieving real impact, and people long to feel understood. For this reason, it is important for advocates to account for the challenges, address them directly where possible and respect the people who face them.

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Systems change is difficult, prolonged and often resisted by those charged with following through.



## Community Examples

### COLUMBIA, MO

The Unite 4 Healthy Neighborhoods partnership in Columbia addressed significant creative tension around issues of race and class by slowing down its timeline and investing in greater community engagement, cultural competency, strategic relationship building, youth advocacy and leadership development.

*Read the full story.*

### KINGSTON, NY

The Healthy Kids for Kingston partnership managed tensions related to differing individual and organizational interests by creating an advisory network, focusing on co-creating a vision and collaborating with residents in more focused and meaningful ways. This generated more room for participants to engage in hands-on, program-oriented opportunities and encouraged partner self-restraint as community leadership asserted itself. *Read the full story.*

### PORTLAND, OR

Healthy Active Communities in Portland addressed creative tension in its efforts to improve low-income, multi-family housing developments and prevent childhood obesity in East Portland by addressing other health issues (such as asthma) and resident concerns where feasible. It chose to advance educational approaches to healthy housing over regulatory ones that might deter further development of multi-family rental housing. *Read the full story.*

# Be Patient and Shift Power to Achieve Equity

**Equity projects are more likely to succeed if built from the ground up.** When a partnership has strong connections to the power structure, it can secure significant changes in policies and the built environment and still not substantially improve the health of target populations. For example, without significant influence from residents and legitimate community leaders, new recreational facilities can remain underused, farmers' markets can make low-income families feel unwelcome and displaced residents may not enjoy the benefits of their neighborhood's gentrification. Furthermore, urban agriculture ordinances can fail to serve the population most in need of fresh food, Complete Streets can take years to come to existing neighborhoods, and groups from outside the neighborhood can dominate shared-use fields. For health equity efforts to yield true, lasting change, what the community change *is* may be less important than *who* drives the change agenda and in whose interest it is led. For all of its challenges and seemingly slow pace of progress, grassroots action is the best way to create new structures and ultimately generate healthier behavior and more equitable health outcomes for the large and growing populations that are currently experiencing, or are at risk for, health disparities.

**Equity does not trickle down or out.** Long-term inequitable distribution of investment, opportunity and access to healthy environments is a systemic and structural phenomenon that became deeply rooted over time. It continues even through changes in leadership, the launch of reform initiatives and the existence of good intentions and professionalism within the top

tiers of the power structure. Leaders at all levels within the power structure who seek change very often confront powerful barriers. These can take the form of entrenched norms, habits, values, beliefs, procedures, personalities, prerogatives, protections or punishments. Generally, these barriers are insurmountable within an election cycle, by a single elected official or by a few staff operating only within their own jobs. Partnerships tend to find greater success over time if they are able to build a community-based constituency for change with a base of power that is independent, broad, informed and equity-oriented enough to consistently support the internal champions of health equity.

**Building quality relationships is an intentional process that takes time.** If an initiative is being led or managed by professionals or other stakeholders from outside a low-income or disadvantaged neighborhood or community, it is critical to forge quality working relationships on the front end and throughout the work. Residents and leaders in communities with a history of disenfranchisement, dislocation, disinvestment and other forms of social injustice often have many reasons to mistrust outside interventions, even by people who mean well. They know well the failed history of past attempts to "serve" or even "empower" the community, and they understand the capacity that exists for change from within the community. Authentic relationship building is fundamental to developing partnerships and common knowledge that will be needed to make good decisions, create useful structures, identify the right leadership, involve the right mix of

people, strengthen ownership over plans and construct a lasting initiative that can withstand the rigors of the work and yield meaningful results. Rushing it for an externally imposed and/or unrealistic timeline does not work.

**Preparation and quality relationships are both fundamental for emerging resident advocates.** Residents of disadvantaged communities and other stakeholders with low political influence gain some power and a sense of their capacity to use it through information, education, training and other forms of preparation to engage in advocacy. But learning is deepest and most effective in the context of addressing a real challenge in real time with real partners. When emerging leaders have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and build working relationships with each other and with other change agents, their learning is integrated and their confidence and influence expand. The opportunity for emerging resident advocates to meet and build a working relationship with relevant professionals who are open to their

observations and ideas, willing to collaborate and are more experienced working within a system is a particularly powerful one. Attending to the growth of these kinds of networks is very beneficial for health equity.

**Scaling policy change can be fraught with tempting shortcuts and challenges to health equity.** Communities are often encouraged to scale a successful policy, environment or program in order to increase its reach. This does not guarantee the intensity, context sensitivity or community support that led to the initial success. The further removed a policy change is, both bureaucratically and geographically, from the population it is intended to serve, the more difficult implementation becomes and the more monitoring, adjustment, resource reallocation and community engagement are required down the line. Especially in complex community settings, advocates who plan to bring their approach to scale should focus early and equal attention on how to support community-level action if they want to produce results.

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For health equity efforts to yield true, lasting change, what the community change *is* may be less important than *who* drives the change agenda and in whose interest it is led.



## Community Examples

- ▲ Fotonovelas helped the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Project to train and support grassroots leaders to advocate for community change across eight counties.

### CENTRAL VALLEY, CA

The Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program built the capacity of grassroots community residents, many of whom were immigrants, to advocate for community change. It developed a region-wide network of strong leaders and achieved significant equity results across an eight-county rural region. Participants in a culturally, linguistically and literacy-level appropriate community leadership training program put lessons into action as they achieved self-identified policy or environmental changes in their respective communities. *Read the full story.*

### PHOENIX, AZ

The Maryvale on the Move initiative in Phoenix worked energetically and persistently to engage, prepare and involve low-income residents through training, assessments and a variety of real-time opportunities to collaborate with professionals and advocate for change. It produced solid health-equity results across an array of strategies by removing barriers to participation, lifting community voices and embedding equity into a number of important policy and environmental changes. *Read the full story.*

# Advancing Policy/Systems Change



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# Introduction

Leading public health organizations have recently emphasized the adoption of new policies to create healthy communities. Much of this is due to mounting evidence about the influence of school, workplace and community environments on health and the knowledge that policy is the primary and most powerful way we influence the nature and performance of those places.

This new emphasis on policy and environmental change has been profoundly productive in communities as public health professionals have learned to collaborate with similarly interested stakeholders promoting walkable, livable communities for environmental, economic and social justice reasons. Policy and environmental change is now a key element of public health's response to major health challenges, such as obesity and asthma. Healthy community design to "make the healthy choice the easy choice" is a major trend affecting the planning and design of our communities.

This is good news. However, it is too early for the institutions of public health to claim victory.

Policy is only one part of a system of supports needed to embed a culture of health in the way we build our communities. In addition, this system is complex. The process of implementing policy itself usually takes great effort and reveals other related policies, practices and resources that need adjustment to achieve the intended impact.

Whether in school districts, workplaces or the various departments of local government, systemic change is won gradually, one institutional or community context at a time. Before difficult change can occur and take hold at a larger scale, partnerships must test new approaches, integrate learning and increase confidence and constituency involvement.

## Lessons in Advancing Policy/Systems Change

- **Address Social and Cultural Factors Along With the Physical Environment**
- **Test, Then Invest**
- **Continuously Evaluate**
- **Sustain the Policy Effort Through Implementation and Beyond**
- **Embrace Complexity—Think About Strategy and Systems**

Beyond good community design and the opportunities it provides for healthy choices, individuals also need encouragement as well as culturally appropriate and reliable social support to adopt and sustain healthy lifestyles. This has long been the challenge of health promotion. *Active Living By Design's Community Action Model* of community change integrates the traditional strengths of health promotion with policy and environmental change.

Healthy community partnerships that see their work holistically, and change as the work evolves, are more likely to achieve their larger vision. Here are some core lessons and principles about the evolution of policy and systems change we have gleaned from the community partnerships with whom we have worked.

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This new emphasis on policy and environmental change has been profoundly productive as public health professionals have learned to collaborate with stakeholders promoting walkable, livable communities for environmental, economic and social justice reasons.

# Address Social and Cultural Factors Along With the Physical Environment

**Supporting and sustaining healthy choices requires changing both the physical and social environments together.** Public health professionals have emphasized policy and the built environment because fundamental changes in practice are needed to supplement traditional health promotion. Health messages and programs can play an important role in informing, motivating and supporting healthy choices for some individuals, but they are insufficient and unsustainable if those individuals encounter a daily environment where healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity are not accessible (e.g., that they are safe, affordable and convenient). Similarly, research indicates that community environments play an important role in improving health. However, efforts to improve the physical environment are rarely sufficient to change people's choices if social supports don't also exist. When social and environmental supports are intentionally integrated, the effect can be significant.

**Strong social and cultural factors challenge policy and environmental approaches and must be understood and ultimately addressed.** Issues such as language, regional or ethnic eating traditions, cultural mores around body image or gender segregation, social isolation, family dysfunction, stress

and depression discourage people from adopting healthier behaviors. It is important to understand challenges like these and honor social motivation along with physical opportunity. Then it may be possible for some organizations to tailor activities, settings, messages and clinical care to the needs of individuals while partnerships continue to work toward broader social change. This approach will help us deliver more fully on the promise of policy and environmental change for better health behavior.

**Integrating social and environmental supports for populations is more challenging at scale.** Partnerships find it challenging enough to combine policy and environmental change with health promotion and programs in individual schools, neighborhoods or very small towns. Across larger geographic or institutional scales, and as the complexity of influences increases, integrating approaches for a specific target population or behavior can become difficult. It is advisable to identify an appropriate policy target and scale for which the partnership can integrate other supports over time and to adjust timelines and expectations to the rigors of doing so. This helps ensure that ambition and leaps of faith do not overcome prudent planning and execution.



## Community Examples

▲ The King County and Seattle Housing Authorities promote cross-cultural exchange among residents and address important social and cultural factors that influence healthy behaviors.

### CUBA, NM

The *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* partnership in Cuba addressed the Navajo community's interest in greater self-determination and economic development as it adjusted its approach to developing a mobile farmers' market for the tri-chapter communities. For more information, please [read the full story](#).

### EL PASO, TX

The HKHC El Paso partnership confronted barriers to residents' use of the Chamizal National Park because the dark green park ranger uniforms looked like those worn by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. [Read the full story](#).

### KING COUNTY AND SEATTLE, WA

Two housing authorities in King County and Seattle worked to promote cross-cultural exchange among residents and addressed necessary social and cultural factors that influence behavior, such as traditional prohibitions of Muslim women to exercise in front of men. [Read the full story](#).

# Test, Then Invest

**Test or pilot projects demonstrate commitment, enhance learning and build credibility.** Many policy and environmental approaches are amenable to pilot efforts, either in a specific location or with a specific group (e.g., a corner store conversion, intersection redesign or a double bucks program for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients at a farmers' market). When pursuing a new approach, pilot efforts can offer a partnership the chance to demonstrate concrete action to a disengaged community, show skeptics what is possible, build demand, learn what works (or doesn't) in a given context and involve additional partners. An unsuccessful pilot can expose unforeseen challenges that support a practical decision not to move forward. On the other hand, a successful pilot can convert skeptics into advocates and build a base of credibility beneath more ambitious plans.

**Pilot efforts conserve resources, increase leverage and lay the groundwork for scaling.** Ambitious initiatives often look for high impact policies or initiatives with large reach in order to meet their goals as quickly as possible. While some partners prefer to go big with a strategy right away, it can be risky and inefficient to do so before learning more about how the strategy works on the ground. It's also important to learn about the other elements that could help produce results for a given population, or to discovering potential unintended consequences. Pilot testing allows a partnership to refine the approach, build in the necessary supports, increase reliability, and examine sustainability and growth potential before committing precious resources to full implementation. This can position the effort more strongly for replication or scaling, build confidence among those who will fund or implement the strategy, and increase the likelihood of future investment.

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Pilot efforts can demonstrate concrete action, convince skeptics, build demand, show what works, help refine the approach and involve additional partners before more resources are committed.



## Community Examples

- ▲ Oakland FRESH pilot tested, then scaled and institutionalized weekly, school-based produce markets in food desert neighborhoods.

### OAKLAND, CA

In Oakland, pilot testing and scaling of weekly, school-based produce markets in food desert neighborhoods helped inform and support a larger systems change within the public schools and the community. [Read the full story.](#)

### CHICAGO, IL

Chicago's *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* partnership effectively used pilot testing to implement pedestrian safety improvements as part of a Safe Routes to Parks initiative in Humboldt Park and to institutionalize healthy-snack vending in the Chicago Park District. [Read the full story.](#)

# Continuously Evaluate

**Early evaluation planning focuses attention, promotes shared understanding and prepares partners.** Developing an evaluation plan from the outset builds consensus among partners about a theory of change and helps them establish a shared understanding of, and commitment to, the most important elements and outcomes. It establishes an expectation of rigor and reinforces a culture of accountability among partners. It can also provide an opportunity to engage community leaders early in the process.

**Evaluation improves action.** Successful partnerships are often those that continuously evaluate their process and progress and adjust or adapt based on the results. This ability to make informed adjustments is critically important as conditions often change, people and resources come and go, and mistakes are made. Partnerships that incorporate evaluation results quickly into their work are able to improve their effectiveness and efficient use of resources.

**Rigorous evaluation builds credibility and support.** Evaluation is a discipline as well as an investment. While some partners may prefer not to invest their time or money on evaluation, it can provide credibility and validation of the work that is important in a competitive environment. Funders and key stakeholders often value measures and evidence as they decide whether to support ongoing projects and where to make adjustments.

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Evaluation is a discipline as well as an investment.



## Community Examples

▲ Multiple evaluation methods helped improve access to parks in Flint, MI.

### FLINT, MI

The *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* partnership in Flint integrated many forms of evaluation into its project from the outset to improve access to quality parks. Results informed priorities and selection of pilot projects, validated effectiveness, guided implementation and informed multiple local plans for the future. [Read the full story.](#)

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Evaluation focuses attention, promotes shared understanding, prepares partners and improves action.

# Sustain the Policy Effort Through Implementation and Beyond

**The struggle for policy adoption can build lasting capacity for change.** Healthy, equitable community change generally takes a public outcry and/or an organized advocacy effort to become part of the policymaking agenda. This effort often results in more than just a new policy. The processes of analyzing choices, informing constituents, refining arguments for debates, training new advocates about the political process and their role, building relationships with decision makers and the media, and organizing coalitions are important capacity-building opportunities that plant the seeds for long-term success. Implementation can be complex and prolonged, and public commitment to policies can be fleeting. Partnerships that use the policy advocacy process to lay the informational, human and communications groundwork to address future challenges as they inevitably arise have a better opportunity to achieve lasting, systemic change.

**Policy work is not over after policy adoption.** During implementation, the implications of a policy become more clear. Disappointments, conflicts and unintended consequences can arise that need to be addressed to improve the operation and impact of the policy and sustain support for it. Unanticipated costs and barriers to implementation can also arise. Partnerships that can move beyond pure advocacy, anticipate such challenges and reorient themselves to address them achieve deeper success over time.

**Pilot projects and community monitoring of implementation help align a policy's consequences with its intention.** Sometimes policies don't work as smoothly as envisioned. Any disconnect between the intention of a policy and its actual consequences can be larger when advocates and decision makers are distant from the environment and people the policy affects. For example, a federal program designed by policy analysts with help from researchers may not anticipate state rule changes or roadblocks before it reaches communities. It may not account for various constraints faced by local implementing groups or participants, and the program may fail to provide needed supports. Furthermore, it may have only a partial understanding of the population or problem and make design mistakes with eligibility, technical assistance or evaluation. As a result, it can be wise to invest in pilot efforts, local monitoring and adjustment efforts, and greater grassroots participation and informed community engagement, especially when policy is created at higher levels of government or is geographically far from where it is implemented.

**A strong constituency makes a policy change more resilient.** A policy change can meet with resistance by those charged with implementing it, and by opponents' efforts to reverse or undermine it. This is a particular risk in the wake of a large political shift in an elected body, if a policy incites strong ideological opposition or is perceived to threaten a powerful interest group. Whether opposition stems from an elected body, business and industry, or citizen action, the

best way to defend policy change from attack is with a solid, broad and organized constituency. Occasionally, a hard-won policy is reversed or advocates grow fatigued. For these reasons, it is advisable to stay informed and vigilant, engage affected citizens directly, organize lasting coalitions and patiently build the long-term human, legal and communications foundation for a defensible policy.



## Community Examples

### KANSAS CITY, KS

Kansas City's regional *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* partnership supported neighborhood-based initiatives to achieve and follow through on policy change. As an example, the Rosedale community enhanced the potential of its Green Corridor Master Plan through a combination of follow-up projects, advocacy and constituency building efforts that have generated greater demand for active transportation, strong political momentum and the kind of community watchfulness that can ensure more successful implementation in the future. [Read the full story.](#)

### NEW ORLEANS, LA

After helping to develop a Complete Streets policy in New Orleans, the KidsWalk Coalition and other advocacy groups joined a city advisory and oversight committee responsible for refining the guidelines for implementation. It also engaged new city staff and worked to maintain a critical mass of diverse advocates to ensure long-term follow through. [Read the full story.](#)

# Embrace Complexity— Think About Strategy and Systems

**Resist overreliance on the most easily controlled or quickly achieved approaches, such as programs.** It is a struggle, especially for diverse groups, to continue when the work is difficult and uncharted, the process is long and unpredictable, and success is uncertain. Everyone wants to feel successful, including funders and elected officials, management and staff, professionals and resident volunteers. To manage the risk of failure, there is often a temptation to set tight boundaries for the work or establish specific programs where success is more easily controlled, achieved and measured within a specific and reliable timeframe. While there is an important place for programs and other well-defined approaches, it is important to assess their contribution and impact in the larger, long-term context.

**Large-scale change has no single path or panacea.** Change does not typically occur through single approaches that simply replicate the same method without continuously learning more about how the system works and changes. Replicating a single policy, program, health message or facility is typically not sufficient for population-level and systems-level impact. Instead of following a single path, the journey to larger systems and culture change involves understanding problems holistically, integrating siloed work, pursuing multiple concurrent strategies, grappling with tradeoffs, and often resetting the system on a foundation of new

values and priorities. Creating structures that can support this work over time and a cadre of leaders who can facilitate it provides a stronger foundation and a bigger impact than a single, quick “fix.”

**The research evidence is only one measure of a strategy’s potential to work.** Data and evidence are important when selecting strategies for community change. They build credibility and confidence, help to break down myths or misunderstanding, and can challenge predominant frames and ideologies that resist change. However, community context is also a vitally important determinant of whether an evidence-based strategy can be successfully adopted, implemented or sustained in a given place and time. For example, a renovated schoolyard can be highly successful at a school with a supportive principal, active parent and community groups, money for programming and political leaders who budget for maintenance. The same strategy may fail where the principal is unsupportive, parents are disengaged, gangs or drug dealers use the schoolyard and a bankrupt school district is putting the school on its closure list. It is important not to assume that research evidence will apply to every context.

**Each successful change affects both the system *and* an advocate’s perspective about it.** When thinking about systems change, it can be useful to envision an upward spiral of successive “wins” with increasing impact. After securing each win, partners often see new or greater opportunities from that fresh vantage point. This often occurs because as their joint capacity to do the work increases, it

decreases the distance or difficulty of the path ahead, updates understanding, and/or clarifies appropriate next steps. In the aftermath of a win, successful partnerships often revisit their vision and values, reassess priorities and conduct new rounds of engagement, resource development and advocacy.

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Large-scale change has no single path or panacea.



## Community Examples

- ▲ The Moore and Montgomery counties HKHC set up a structure to support context-specific changes in five municipalities across two high-need rural counties.

### SAN ANTONIO, TX

The San Antonio *Healthy Kids, Healty Communities* partnership piloted Healthy Hubs, an integrated, multi-pronged strategy to leverage impact and create healthy community change. Learning from the mixed success of early neighborhood pilots, it continues to use a neighborhood and community-school partnership approach in which 10 neighborhood initiatives are supported with full-time community organizers and mini grants. [Read the full story.](#)

### MOORE AND MONTGOMERY COUNTIES, NC

The Moore and Montgomery counties HKHC project worked on an array of complex healthy eating, active living challenges and environments in order to influence the thinking of advocates and decision makers and achieve large-scale impacts over time. [Read the full story.](#)

# Glossary

The following definitions are tailored for the purposes of this document. They are adapted from multiple definitions used in the field to support the specific context and content in which the terms appear.

**Community Capacity:** The collective ability of people and community organizations to define and achieve their goals. Communities with capacity have a combination of knowledge and skills, cohesion and commitment, structures and networks, and access to resources that support effective decision making and action over time.

**Community Context:** Specific community settings and circumstances such as existing leaders and relationships, resources, readiness and capacity, current demand, culture, history, economic conditions, current conflict, local stories, and/or dominant political ideology.

**Creative Tension:** Creative tension comes from a group clearly seeing a shared vision and telling the truth about their current situation. It is a state in which disagreement or discord ultimately gives rise to better ideas or outcomes.

**Diversity:** The full range of how people differ. Embracing diversity invites the exploration and understanding of differing experiences and perspectives. In this context, it most often refers to differences across race, class, age, gender, disability, culture, language, citizenship status, health status, political belief and professional discipline.

**Equity:** Fair inclusion and opportunity for all to reach their full potential. This means learning what people need in order to be included or in order to seize opportunity, and then providing what they need. While it does not mean equality, equity as a directive strategy decreases gaps in outcomes between different social groups.

**Frame:** A shared and durable cultural principle that people use to organize new information and make sense of their world. Framing is a quality of communication that leads others to accept one meaning over another and act accordingly.

**Facilitative Leadership:** A style of leadership that inspires and creates the conditions for teams, organizations or communities to effectively and creatively address shared goals and leverage opportunities for greater social impact. This includes making it easy for others to offer their unique perspectives and talents, speak up when they have problems, take initiative, make appropriate decisions, work with others, and share responsibility for the health of the team, organization or community.

**Health Equity:** The state in which all people have the opportunity to attain their full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of his or her social position or other socially determined circumstance. It is the absence of unjust, unnatural, avoidable, systemic and sustained health status differences in the distribution of disease, illness and mortality rates across population groups.

**Language Justice:** A commitment to create multilingual spaces where language is used democratically and as a tool of empowerment so that people can communicate, learn and strategize together. Multilingual spaces require both good interpretation (oral) and translation (written) skills as well as a wider commitment from groups to support these spaces.

**Learning Network:** A group of people who share a commitment and are actively engaged in learning together and from each other, using a variety of communications methods, for the betterment of their common work. Learning networks, in this context, are frequently supported by funders as part of their efforts to provide technical assistance to healthy community partnerships.

**Population Health:** The health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group.

**Scaling:** A process to extend community-level change through an increase in the number of changes or the number of communities experiencing a given change. For this document, scaling does not address issues such as depth, sustainability or ownership of change. It seeks, but does not guarantee, an increase in impact.

**Strategic Communication:** The carefully planned synchronization of images, actions and deliberate messages to get the right people to take the right action at the right time to achieve a desired effect. In this context, strategic communication is multidirectional and requires listening and learning to reach both internal and external audiences.

# Resources

As one might expect from the integrated nature of healthy communities work, the lessons and principles discussed in this document are mutually reinforcing and do not always fall neatly into their respective categories. The following recommended online resources are the same. They provide a range of content related to the lessons, including frameworks, tools and action models; brief articles on key issues of practice; introductory guides for the broader topics of equity advocacy, sustainability and healthy community change; and rich portals to other useful information and resources.

## **A Practitioner's Guide for Advancing Health Equity: Community Strategies for Preventing Chronic Disease**

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/pdf/FoundationalSkills.pdf>

Featuring lessons learned from practitioners across the country, this guide focuses on how to enhance capacity to advance healthy equity through a variety of foundational skills and practices. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

## **Collaboration Multiplier**

[http://www.preventioninstitute.org/index.php?option=com\\_jlibrary&view=article&id=44&Itemid=127](http://www.preventioninstitute.org/index.php?option=com_jlibrary&view=article&id=44&Itemid=127)

The Collaboration Multiplier is a tool for analyzing collaborative health efforts across disciplines. It helps individuals working in partnerships—both formal and informal—to better understand their partners' strengths, motivations and desired outcomes. It is designed to help organizations identify potential new collaborators and how to best engage them. (Prevention Institute)

## **County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (CHR&R) Action Center**

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/roadmaps/action-center>

The CHR&R Action Center is organized around a multi-step Action Cycle. A guide for each step describes key activities within each step and provides suggested tools, resources and additional reading. There is also a guide for each of the many different types of partners. These guides provide information on the role that each can play in improving the health of communities along with guidance on what they can do during each action step. (University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute)

## **Framing Public Issues Toolkit**

<http://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF/FramingPublicIssuesfinal.pdf>

This toolkit helps issue advocates learn and apply new communications thinking to frame their work for better public understanding and engagement. It provides an introduction to the Strategic Frames Analysis approach, explains each element of a frame and provides tools. Other important healthy communities topics include rural issues, food systems, government, food and fitness, youth and health disparities. In each of these areas it offers research reports, messaging tips and applied tools. (FrameWorks Institute)

## **Getting Equity Advocacy Results (GEAR)**

[http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.8372439/k.47E8/GETTING\\_EQUITY\\_ADVOCACY\\_RESULTS\\_\\_text\\_version.htm](http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.8372439/k.47E8/GETTING_EQUITY_ADVOCACY_RESULTS__text_version.htm)

GEAR draws from the wisdom and experience of seasoned advocates and action researchers to provide useful benchmarks, frameworks, and tools for measuring progress in equity efforts for policy change across a range of issues. (PolicyLink)

## **Messaging Guide: A New Way to Talk About the Social Determinants of Health**

<http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2010/rwjf63023>

This guide shares a way to create more compelling, effective and persuasive messages that resonate across the political spectrum. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)

### Smart Chart

<http://www.smartchart.org/>

The Smart Chart is an interactive tool for developing, evaluating and reviewing strategic communications plans. It presents a straightforward process that is particularly well suited for nonprofit organizations or coalitions that want to link communications efforts to their goals. (Spitfire Strategies)

### Sustainability Planning Guide

[http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/pdf/sustainability\\_guide.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/pdf/sustainability_guide.pdf)

The Sustainability Planning Guide is a synthesis of science- and practice-based evidence designed to help coalitions, public health professionals and other community stakeholders develop, implement and evaluate a successful sustainability plan. The Guide provides a process for sustaining policy strategies and related activities, introduces various approaches to sustainability and demonstrates sustainability planning in action with real-life examples. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

### Tension of Turf

<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-103/127.html>

Tension of Turf is a companion tool to Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight Step Guide. It offers practical support for skillfully managing the dynamic tension that commonly arises when people collaborate. This guide helps coalitions derive authentic, constructive power from their varying perspectives, skills and mandates. (Prevention Institute)

### The Art of Facilitative Leadership: Maximizing Others' Contributions

<http://bit.ly/1oeEzrQ>

This brief feature article provides a quick introduction of the basics of facilitative leadership, and why it is important. (The Systems Thinker)

### The Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities

<http://bit.ly/1rSq7W7>

Created for the Sustainable Communities Initiative, this guide offers context-sensitive guidelines and strategies for meaningful community engagement. (PolicyLink and Kirwan Institute)

### THRIVE: (Tool for Health and Resilience In Vulnerable Environments)

<http://thrive.preventioninstitute.org/Thrive/index.php>

THRIVE is a tool to help people understand and prioritize the factors within their own communities that can help improve health and safety. The tool identifies key factors and allows a user to rate how important that factor might be in the community. It also provides information about how each factor relates to health outcomes, and offers some direction about what to do to address the factor and where to go for more information. (Prevention Institute)

### Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory

<https://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Research-Services/Pages/Wilder-Collaboration-Factors-Inventory.aspx>

This free tool is useful for assessing how a collaboration is doing on 20 research-tested success factors. The inventory takes about fifteen minutes to complete. It can be distributed to a small group of leaders in a collaborative, during a general meeting or via mail to all members for the most complete picture. Scores can be tallied manually or online. (Amherst H. Wilder Foundation)

# Endnotes

For those who are reading this in printed form, the following is a list of the hyperlinks embedded throughout the document. They are listed in alphabetical order, rather than sequentially as they appear in the text.

## **Active Living By Design's 5P Model:**

<http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Community-Action-Model.png>

## **Community Examples:**

Baldwin Park, CA: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Baldwin-Park-CA.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Baldwin-Park-CA.pdf)

Benton County, OR: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Benton-County-OR.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Benton-County-OR.pdf)

Buffalo, NY: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Buffalo-NY.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Buffalo-NY.pdf)

Central Valley, CA: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Central-Valley-CA.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Central-Valley-CA.pdf)

Charleston, WV: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Charleston-WV.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Charleston-WV.pdf)

Chattanooga, TN: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Chattanooga-TN.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Chattanooga-TN.pdf)

Chicago, IL: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Chicago-IL.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Chicago-IL.pdf)

Columbia, MO: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Columbia-MO.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Columbia-MO.pdf)

Cuba, NM: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Cuba-NM.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Cuba-NM.pdf)

Denver, CO: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Denver-CO.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Denver-CO.pdf)

Desoto, Tate and Marshall counties, MS: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Desoto-Marshall-and-Tate-counties-MS.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Desoto-Marshall-and-Tate-counties-MS.pdf)

El Paso, TX: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/El-Paso-TX.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/El-Paso-TX.pdf)

Fitchburg, MA: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Fitchburg-MA.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Fitchburg-MA.pdf)

Flint, MI: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Flint-MI.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Flint-MI.pdf)

Greenville, SC: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Greenville-SC.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Greenville-SC.pdf)

Hamilton County, OH: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Hamilton-County-OH.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Hamilton-County-OH.pdf)

Houghton County, MI: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Houghton-County-MI.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Houghton-County-MI.pdf)

Jefferson County, AL: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Jefferson-County-AL.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Jefferson-County-AL.pdf)

Kane County, IL: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Kane-County-IL.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Kane-County-IL.pdf)

Kansas City, KS: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Kansas-City-KS.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Kansas-City-KS.pdf)

King County and Seattle, WA: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/King-County-and-Seattle-WA.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/King-County-and-Seattle-WA.pdf)

Kingston, NY: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Kingston-NY.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Kingston-NY.pdf)

Knox County, TN: <http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Knox-County-TN.pdf>

Louisville, KY: <http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Louisville-KY.pdf>

Milwaukee, WI: <http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Milwaukee-WI.pdf>

Moore and Montgomery counties, NC: <http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Moore-and-Montgomery-counties-NC.pdf>

Nash and Edgecombe counties, NC: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Nash-and-Edgecombe-counties-NC.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Nash-and-Edgecombe-counties-NC.pdf)

New Orleans, LA: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/New-Orleans-LA.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/New-Orleans-LA.pdf)

Oakland, CA: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Oakland-CA.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Oakland-CA.pdf)

Omaha, NE: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Omaha-NE.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Omaha-NE.pdf)

Phoenix, AZ: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Phoenix-AZ.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Phoenix-AZ.pdf)

Portland, OR: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Portland-OR.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Portland-OR.pdf)

Rancho Cucamonga, CA: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Rancho-Cucamonga-CA.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Rancho-Cucamonga-CA.pdf)

Rochester, NY: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Rochester-NY.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Rochester-NY.pdf)

San Antonio, TX: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/San-Antonio-TX.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/San-Antonio-TX.pdf)

Somerville, MA: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Somerville-MA.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Somerville-MA.pdf)

Spartanburg, SC: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Spartanburg-SC.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Spartanburg-SC.pdf)

Washington, DC: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Washington-DC.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Washington-DC.pdf)

Watsonville and Pajaro Valley, CA: [www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Watsonville-and-Pajaro-Valley-CA.pdf](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Watsonville-and-Pajaro-Valley-CA.pdf)

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[www.activelivingbydesign.org/contact/](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/contact/)

**Photovoice:**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photovoice>

**Promotoras:**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Promotoras>

**The Road Map for a Healthy Future in Rancho Cucamonga:**

[www.cityofrc.us/documents/HealthyRCStrategicPlanDraft.pdf](http://www.cityofrc.us/documents/HealthyRCStrategicPlanDraft.pdf)

**The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:**

[www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org)

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*Thank You*

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