

Lessons from the Field: Promoting Healthy Eating in Communities



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**HEALTHY EATING
BY DESIGN**

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The Childhood Obesity Issue



Childhood obesity rates have increased dramatically over the past four decades and have reached an unprecedented level. Today, obesity is one of the most pressing health concerns for our children. One-third of American children and adolescents—about 25 million kids—are overweight or obese, and unhealthy eating is a leading contributor to the epidemic.

Unfortunately, a healthy diet is out of reach for many American children. Too many schools offer easy access to junk foods and sugary drinks, while providing few options for healthy appealing foods and beverages. In underserved communities, there is a lack of grocery stores that stock affordable fresh produce, and many families are not able to provide nutritious meals for their children. African-American, Latino, Native American, Asian American and Pacific Islander children living in low-income communities are especially vulnerable to obesity.

The Healthy Eating by Design Approach

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to reversing the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015. The Foundation is working to improve access

to affordable healthy foods and opportunities for safe physical activity among children in schools and communities nationwide. In 2005, Healthy Eating by Design was one of RWJF's investments in this area.

The Healthy Eating by Design pilot project was established as part of Active Living by Design—a national program funded by RWJF that supports 25 community partnerships across the country that aim to increase physical activity and healthy eating by changing community design. In June 2005, 12 Active Living by Design community partnerships each received \$50,000 to help identify and implement promising healthy eating strategies during an 18-month period.

The overarching goals of the Healthy Eating by Design pilot project were to:

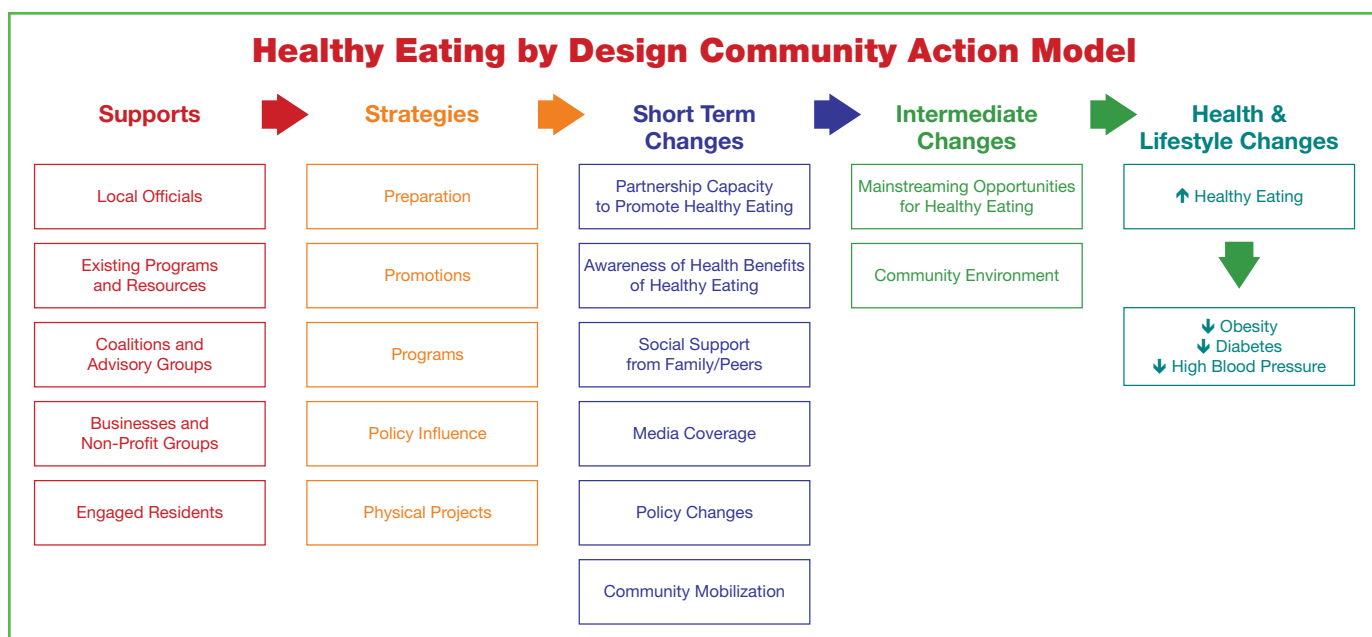
- improve access to affordable, healthy and appealing foods in schools and neighborhoods;
- demonstrate promising policy and environmental solutions for healthy eating that could be replicated in other communities;

- identify how integrated active living and healthy eating strategies could improve the health of our nation's children; and
- contribute to the emerging knowledge base for the prevention of obesity among children living in low-income communities.

The Healthy Eating by Design partnerships received technical assistance from the Active Living by Design national program office to support their efforts. Technical assistance included providing coaching, education, training, resources and facilitation in relevant content areas and program development, implementation and evaluation. Healthy Eating by Design partnerships also followed Active Living by Design's Community Action Model, which identifies key strategies and desired short- and long-term changes that are likely to create healthier communities. The model was adapted by Active Living by Design and used as a framework for the Healthy

Eating by Design pilot project (pictured below). Multi-disciplinary partnerships are the cornerstone of the model, and many of the existing Active Living by Design partnerships engaged new partners as they began their work on healthy eating initiatives. Thus, the communities had experience developing and implementing policy and environmental change strategies and were well positioned to develop initiatives that facilitate healthy eating.

The Healthy Eating by Design partnerships focused their efforts in either the school or community setting. They also implemented strategies to impact the home environments of children and families living in low-income communities. This report includes case studies that profile each of the five community-based Healthy Eating by Design partnerships. It also highlights keys to success and lessons learned from the partnerships and pilot project, as well as a description of resources for communities interested in healthy eating initiatives.



The community action model shows how healthy eating strategies can be integrated into a community or school setting to increase access to healthy foods. Each of the 5P strategies is comprised of specific tactics. Preparation involves partnership development, assessment and sustainability planning. Promotions tactics involve targeted communications with project audiences and policy-makers. Programs are organized, on-going activities that encourage healthy eating. Policy changes aim to inform, influence and implement policies that support healthy eating. Physical projects directly improve the local environment and/or remove existing barriers to accessing healthy foods and healthy eating opportunities.

Case Studies

Louisville: Introducing Kids to Gardening—and Healthy Eating

Project Population Quick Facts*

Race/Ethnicity:

98% African American

Median household income:

89% less than \$15,000

Population living below federal poverty line:

52%

Children qualifying for free-/reduced-lunch:

94%



Louisville, Kentucky

Lead Agency: Louisville Metro Housing Authority

Agency Type: Government

Project Area: Smoketown urban neighborhood with public housing

Healthy Eating Partners:

- Local chef
- Neighborhood community center
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Local community farm alliance
- County Cooperative Extension Service

Thanks to the Louisville Healthy Eating by Design project, a once barren patch of land with high lead levels was transformed into a safe and fertile space to grow fruits and vegetables. It also became a community gathering place where neighborhood children learned about growing and eating healthy foods. The project even sparked new interest in gardening among some children who had touched soil for the first time in their lives as part of a school program.

* Project population quick facts for each case study are based on best available data provided in grant proposals, which were submitted April 2005.

Although the members of the Louisville community partnership faced many obstacles as they worked to establish the St. Peter Claver Community Garden, the power of their network helped them overcome the challenges with fortitude and creativity. As a result, the partnership secured \$70,000 in direct and in-kind donations for remediation and tilling work, as well as a \$30,000 grant from the sewer district to support the garden.

Project partners offered healthy eating education and held programs in the garden and throughout the neighborhood. For example, Nancy Russman, who has lived and worked as a chef in the community for years, taught regular food preparation classes at a variety of neighborhood locations, including the middle school, community center and farmers' market. **"It was a wonderful challenge to help my neighbors learn about healthy eating,"** says Chef Nancy. **"I tried to incorporate familiar ingredients with healthy choices, remembering *never* to tell anyone what they eat is bad or wrong."**

Cooking classes were even offered to students at the truancy court, who found the classes to be a positive diversion as they waited to stand before the judge. The students were perhaps the most attentive audience, and they even encouraged their parents to make healthy changes at home.

To further improve access to healthy foods for children and families, the partnership conducted a two-season WIC Special Supplemental Nutrition Program at the neighborhood farmers' market, which resulted in increases in WIC and Food Stamp redemption rates as well as overall market attendance. The pilot was so successful that the Louisville Community Farm Alliance recommended expanding the program as its top policy priority to state and city legislators. In addition, a private foundation has committed funds to continue the program for a third season. The partnership also plans to disseminate best practices and lessons learned from their work in a Healthy Eating by Design policy and tactics compendium, garden curriculum and video documentary.

Long-term partnerships and funding sources will sustain the promising approaches identified through the work of the Louisville Healthy Eating by Design project. A keen understanding of the need for collaborative and diverse partnerships has undoubtedly been a cornerstone of the project's success. The lead partners, who demonstrated patience as community readiness grew, have modeled the healthy behaviors and policies they have asked of their partnering organizations, while also listening to and acknowledging the cultural context and challenges before making recommendations for change.

More details about the Louisville community partnership are available online at: www.activelivingbydesign.org/louisville.

A smile filled with wonder and amazement spread across the boy's face as he reached his hands into the dirt for the first time—as part of his school's gardening class.



Portland: Neighborhood Farmers' Market Meets the Needs of an International Community

Project Population Quick Facts*

Race/Ethnicity:
73% White

Median household income:
\$35,321

Population living below federal poverty line:
16%

Children qualifying for free-/reduced-lunch:
71%



Portland, Oregon

Lead Agency: American Heart Association

Agency Type: Health, nonprofit

Project Area: Lents community in a suburban working-class neighborhood

Healthy Eating Partners:

- Neighborhood food group
- City and county food policy council
- Local educational farm
- Local community service garden organization
- Neighborhood Boys and Girls Club

Residents of the Lents neighborhood wondered if their voices had been heard. They had shared their desire for increased access to healthy affordable foods as part of a previous food assessment project, but change had yet to take place. The Portland Healthy Eating by Design partnership responded by using their grant to implement the residents' ideas and recommendations. This commitment to meeting residents' needs guided every aspect of the Portland Healthy Eating by Design project.

* Project population quick facts for each case study are based on best available data provided in grant proposals, which were submitted April 2005.

The grassroots Lents Food Group was organized to respond to the residents' desire for a neighborhood farmers' market. A previous attempt to maintain a small farmers' market in Lents had failed, and drive-through restaurants and convenience stores had become the most accessible places for residents to purchase food.

By recognizing the needs of their own community, the group was able to successfully implement three pilot farmers' markets to serve the culturally diverse neighborhood and fill a market niche within the Portland area. The success of the Lents International Farmers' Market pilots attracted attention from community development advocates and enabled the partnership to secure funding to establish a weekly market for three additional years.

During its second year of operation, the market attracted 500 people every weekend and became a neighborhood gathering place. The Healthy Eating by Design project also provided opportunities for Lents neighborhood youth to learn about healthy eating and gardening through classes at the Wattles Boys and Girls Club. A summer Grow Wise camp provided another learning experience related to farm-to-table connections and the benefits of eating fresh fruits and vegetables. Some club members were trained to plant gardens at homes of Lents residents to help bring healthy foods even closer to the home environment.

Children who participated in these programs reported greater willingness to try new fruits and vegetables and an increased interest in gardening. Working to meet the community needs informed the partnership's broader policy efforts to incorporate food access into city planning. The partnership developed draft recommendations to the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council and local city officials to amend the Portland Comprehensive Plan to include food access issues. They also helped establish a standing Food Access Committee of the Food Policy Council, which will continue to work on food policies to serve low-income communities.

By engaging with the local community to extend the efforts of a previous assessment project, the Portland Healthy Eating by Design partnership has helped the Lents neighborhood become a healthier, more vibrant place to live.

More details about the Portland community partnership are available online at: www.activelivingbydesign.org/portland.

Working to meet the community's needs informed the partnership's broader policy efforts to incorporate food access into city planning.



Santa Ana: The Importance of Culturally-tailored Healthy Eating Programs

Project Population Quick Facts*

Race/Ethnicity:

Approximately 90% Latino

Accurate census data for Santa Ana is limited, due to the high number of undocumented residents living in the neighborhood.



Santa Ana, California

Lead Agency: YMCA of Orange County

Agency Type: Health, nonprofit

Project Area: Apartment complexes in an urban Latino neighborhood

Healthy Eating Partners:

- Local parent and community champion
- Managers of apartment complexes
- Neighborhood community centers
- Neighborhood farmers' market
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Food Stamp Program

* Project population quick facts for each case study are based on best available data provided in grant proposals, which were submitted April 2005.

Living in America meant better opportunities for families in the Warwick and Meadows apartment complexes. But that wasn't true when it came to healthy eating: the most accessible grocery store was a mile away from their homes. Lack of transportation meant that vendor trucks, which sell mostly unhealthy snacks such as sweet breads and fried pork rinds, were frequently the most convenient source of food. But thanks to the vision of the Santa Ana Healthy Eating by Design partnership and a community champion, residents now have better opportunities for healthy eating.

A bus route brochure was developed to help families access the farmers' market where they could use WIC Special Supplemental Nutrition Program vouchers and Food Stamp program benefits. The brochure helped link residents to available food sources—and, as a result, WIC and Food Stamp benefit redemption rates increased.

The Healthy Eating by Design project also supported the development of the existing farmers' market through physical improvements, including a canopy for cooking demonstrations and classes and a shed for on-site program supplies. Services were also brought home to the apartment complex, as the project made provisions to allow residents to apply for the Food Stamp Program on-site at the family resource center.

In addition, healthy eating programs developed specifically for Spanish-speaking cultures—such as Latino 5 a Day, recipe exchanges, taste testing, cooking demonstrations and classes—were offered for mothers and children. Learning about healthy eating sparked so much interest among the teens that they created a Healthy Eating by Design logo and took charge of posting updated healthy eating material on the apartment complex bulletin board. Some of them even became role models by serving as “promotores,” or lay health advisors for their peers.

Maria Halverson, who led the Santa Ana Healthy Eating by Design project, was critical to its success. Maria was effective as a community champion because she gained the respect and trust of the people for whom she works so diligently, serving in leadership roles with several community organizations. She also had personal experience as a community member, wife and mother of three children, which made her sensitive to the needs and challenges of children and families in the community. As one resident said, **“We trust her because she has listened when she should listen and led when she should have led.”** Winning the confidence of community members helped the partnership connect existing resources and create new opportunities to meet its needs. For many local residents, healthy eating and healthy foods are now a part of everyday life in Santa Ana.

More details about the Santa Ana community partnership are available online at: www.activelivingbydesign.org/santa_ana.

A bus route brochure helped link residents to available food sources—and, as a result, WIC and Food Stamp benefit redemption rates increased.



Somerville: Farmers' Market Makes Healthy Eating Affordable for All

Project Population Quick Facts*

Race/Ethnicity:

30% White; 21% Latino;
32% Mixed/Other including
Brazilian, Haitian Creole,
Portuguese

Median household income:

less than \$25,000 - \$43,160

Population living below federal poverty line:

15%

Children qualifying for free-/reduced-lunch:

65%



Somerville, Massachusetts

Lead Agency: City of Somerville

Agency Type: Government

Project Area: East Somerville community in a multicultural urban neighborhood

Healthy Eating Partners:

- Volunteer health advisors
- Community revitalization program
- Statewide farmers' market organization
- Local health care system
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Food Stamp Program

* Project population quick facts for each case study are based on best available data provided in grant proposals, which were submitted April 2005.

Neighborhood farmers' markets are ideal venues for families to purchase fresh healthy foods. But many markets appeal more to clientele in middle- to upper-income levels. The Somerville Healthy Eating by Design partnership decided to create a farmers' market in Union Square that would be more welcoming to low-income and immigrant families.

The partnership recognized that in order to be successful, all of their strategies needed to be culturally-, linguistically- and economically-appropriate for community residents. As a result, promotional materials for the farmers' market, including way-finding signs, were produced in four languages: Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Spanish and English. Volunteer health advisors conducted nutrition and food preparation educational sessions at the market in various languages, and offered other family and kid-friendly activities. Invitations and an incentive program that contributed an additional \$1-2 for every \$5 in benefits spent at the market encouraged WIC and Food Stamp program beneficiaries to attend as well. The Healthy Eating by Design partnership also supported vendors by providing clear instructions on how to accept and redeem the Food Stamp tokens.

By addressing the cultural and economic barriers, the farmers' market at Union Square provided an attractive community gathering place for families of all income levels. By the second season of its operations, the farmers' market attracted more than twice as many families with children than in the previous season. Total attendance, the percentage of foreign-born and low-income customers, and the redemption rate of WIC Special Supplemental Nutrition Program vouchers also increased.

Purchasing an electronic benefits transfer machine and developing guidelines for its use at the farmers' market served as a model for broader dissemination at other markets throughout the City of Somerville and the greater Boston area. The Community Farmers' Market by Design initiatives resulted in a reported economic impact of more than \$500,000 each year for Union Square, and the best practices resulting from the Healthy Eating by Design project have positioned the farmers' market for continued success. The farmers' market has also become one of the best known projects of Union Square Main Streets' neighborhood revitalization efforts, and local residents describe it as **"a weekly neighborhood ... party!"**

More details about the Somerville community partnership are available online at: www.activelivingbydesign.org/somerville.

By the second season of its operations, the farmers' market attracted more than twice as many families with children than in the previous season.



Upper Valley: Creating a Culture of Health in Romano Circle

Project Population Quick Facts*

Race/Ethnicity:
90% White

Median household income:
\$17,360

**Population living below
federal poverty line:**
47%

**Children qualifying for
free-/reduced-lunch:**
Data not available



Upper Valley, New Hampshire/Vermont

Lead Agency: Upper Valley Trails Alliance

Agency Type: Trails advocacy

Project Area: Public housing community in a small rural town

Healthy Eating Partners:

- Local farmers
- Regional community development organization
- City housing authority
- Local Cooperative Extension Service
- Local college community service volunteers

* Project population quick facts for each case study are based on best available data provided in grant proposals, which were submitted April 2005.

Cooking coaches, a youth garden and a community food storage facility—these were some of the tools this community partnership used to create a healthier environment at the Romano Circle public housing complex. Convenient access to healthy foods has been critical to helping residents change their eating habits, but they also struggle with other daily issues related to childcare, transportation and finances. Consequently, the Healthy Eating by Design partnership needed to find creative ways to bring healthy eating opportunities to children and families living at Romano Circle.

Serving healthy foods at community meals, in-home cooking coaches and “pick-your-own” farm trips provided opportunities for parents to learn and practice healthy eating behaviors. The Healthy Eating by Design partnership also offered input to the local school’s wellness policy to reinforce healthy eating for the children at school. In addition, the project included a youth garden at the housing complex that provided hands-on opportunities for children to develop gardening skills and healthy eating habits. And finally, the Healthy Eating by Design partnership supported the construction of a new trail around the garden, which made it a neighborhood gathering place where children planned healthy eating skits and performed for their parents. After seeing the garden’s positive impact, residents embraced the responsibility to maintain it. Some of the youth gardeners have even developed an entrepreneurial spirit—they plan to sell the produce they’ve grown at the local farmers’ market.

The Healthy Eating by Design project also supported the creation of healthy eating treasure hunts at Romano Circle and the neighborhood farmers’ market to engage the children. Families learned how to reduce food expenses by collaborative food buying, bulk food storage and preservation methods. Residents were given access to a community freezer and developed guidelines for its use. Romano Circle soon became a place that made healthy eating a priority. More families said they no longer found it difficult to prepare meals with fresh vegetables, and fewer had the perception that fresh vegetables are too expensive. Positive attitudes about healthy foods also touched the lives of Romano Circle children, as parents reported that their kids were eating more fruits and vegetables since the onset of the Healthy Eating by Design project.

More details about the Upper Valley community partnership are available online at: www.activelivingbydesign.org/upper_valley.

Positive attitudes about healthy foods also touched the lives of Romano Circle children, as parents reported that their kids were eating more fruits and vegetables since the onset of the Healthy Eating by Design project.



Keys to Success

How and why did these five projects work? What did they accomplish collectively? Below are the innovative strategies behind the successful tactics and accomplishments shared by the portfolio of community-based Healthy Eating by Design partnerships.

The Partnerships Leveraged Resources and Ensured Sustainability

- The Healthy Eating by Design partnerships garnered more than a quarter of a million dollars in additional funding.
- They generated a wealth of resources, including time from volunteers, student interns and parents; nutritional education and gardening materials; and healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables.
- Several of the partnerships received post-grant funding and resources that will enable them to continue their work and disseminate best practices.
- The partnerships replicated some of their best practices and policies within member organizations.

The Partnerships Evolved and Developed Community Capacity

- The Healthy Eating by Design partnerships created relationships with new partners and strengthened existing networks. Although the lead agencies already were engaged in policy and environmental work related to physical activity, the Healthy Eating by Design grants required them to identify and engage new partners with expertise in nutrition, food, gardening and other areas related to healthy eating.
- They identified common goals and created mutually beneficial relationships that helped sustain the community's commitment beyond the grant project.
- The partnerships actively sought out residents' input for planning and implementation as a way to engage them in the projects.

The Partnerships Integrated Healthy Eating Approaches and Best Practices

- The partnerships implemented culturally-, linguistically- and educationally-appropriate communications and promotion strategies through a variety of venues and on multiple occasions. A majority of the partnerships focused on reaching culturally diverse populations.
- The partnerships integrated their strategies to increase healthy food options with physical changes that made healthy foods more accessible to low-income families. For example, one partnership established a community garden one block from the neighborhood farmers' market and middle school. The garden site helped to revitalize neighborhood farmers' markets, and provided residents' an opportunity to grow and learn about healthy foods.
- Healthy eating programs were delivered to community members in environments that were familiar and easily accessible, such as in-home cooking coaches and demonstrations at neighborhood centers, as well as in non-traditional settings such as truancy court.
- Policy changes reinforced the Healthy Eating by Design partnerships' program, physical project and promotion strategies. Several of the partnerships advanced their advocacy efforts through work with city food policy councils and other local policy-makers.

The Partnerships Engaged Families

- The Healthy Eating by Design partnerships worked with parents to create healthy home environments by offering family-focused, hands-on initiatives such as taste testing, cooking coaches and demonstrations. Partnerships that conducted post-project surveys with parents reported increases in knowledge about healthy foods and willingness to purchase and prepare healthy meals.
- The partnerships found that educating children also influenced parents and families. They received numerous (often unsolicited) comments from parents, including: **"Are you the one that got my kid to eat celery? She wouldn't eat celery and now she wants it for lunch, dinner and breakfast!"**

What We've Learned

Perhaps the most valuable feature of the Healthy Eating by Design pilot project is the collection of various lessons learned. The partnerships began with knowledge of their communities' needs, challenges and opportunities—and even more importantly, they embraced the flexibility allowed by the Healthy Eating by Design grant to test innovative approaches. The following lessons are based on the collective experiences of the partnerships, and are intended to help communities interested in doing similar work to prevent childhood obesity through policy and environmental changes.

Comprehensive projects utilizing the Healthy Eating by Design Community Action Model, with an emphasis on policy and environmental changes, can achieve a significant impact on children's eating attitudes and behaviors.

The model and Healthy Eating by Design's approach includes the 5P strategies: Preparation, Promotions, Programs, Policy and Physical Projects (see Community Action Model on page 3). These strategies guide the partnerships' work to support healthy eating within their project area. Applying these strategies to a defined population within a specific project area best positions projects for success. Implementing the program, promotion and physical project strategies was easier for the community-based Healthy Eating by Design partnerships than was policy change. Although policy efforts required more time and effort, the partnerships were successful in influencing healthy eating policies within the communities and, in some cases, within the city at large and their own organizations.

Integration of healthy eating and active living is both valuable and challenging.

Integrating multiple active living and healthy eating strategies requires a strong commitment to collaboration and learning. It also demands a serious investment in capacity building for partnerships that are not already addressing both healthy eating and active living. Full integration of the 5P strategies across both healthy eating and active living initiatives requires a solid understanding of the target population and the available resources. Successful projects also need diverse and supportive

partners and a well-timed intervention that is designed to support both healthy eating and active living behaviors over time. Lastly, the partnerships must respond to changing priorities and situations with flexibility and creativity.

Timing and duration are important considerations within the context of seasonal healthy eating initiatives.

The Healthy Eating by Design projects began in June 2005, leaving most of the partnerships with little time to prepare for the upcoming farmers' market and gardening seasons. The duration of the grant, and the length of market and growing seasons, limited their ability to refine and re-apply promising strategies. Timing and duration also influenced the partnerships' ability to build strong relationships, respond to changes in staffing and partners, and be present when communities determined they were ready for change. Though the Healthy Eating by Design pilot program had a fairly defined focus in terms of geographic area and population, all of the partnerships felt they could have achieved more—even with just six months of additional time.

Partnerships can evolve in ways that enable them to be continually effective in addressing community issues.

This evolution should include acknowledging gaps in a partnership's expertise, experience and capacity, and forming relationships to fill them. However, a balance must be maintained so that partner organizations do not drift from their mission. The Healthy Eating by Design grants required some of the Active Living by Design partnerships to stretch beyond their primary areas of focus. While some lead agencies whose missions did not encompass healthy eating struggled, others were able to create new networks that led to larger-scale opportunities and improved organizational capacity. Having partners who recognized that there may be different routes to achieve a common vision and showed enthusiasm for healthy eating helped make their work easier, more efficient and rewarding. Early identification of common missions and goals, as well as tangible, mutually beneficial outcomes helps create cohesive and committed partnerships.

Members of the community must be engaged in the work and recognized as full and equal members of a partnership.

Community members should be supported in their efforts to lead and shape projects. They can help provide an understanding of the cultural and economic context of community life, as well as relevant history regarding food access and eating practices. Since the views and issues of community members may be perceived as unique and divergent from that of the partnership, it is essential that their input is obtained from the onset so that they become allies rather than roadblocks. This level of community engagement requires time, patience and flexibility, particularly when the work involves changing deeply-rooted attitudes and behaviors about foods and eating behaviors. Successful partnerships avoid pushing communities along a specific timetable or proposing major, immediate changes which may alienate the community and stakeholders.

Incremental and simple changes can have a meaningful impact. They may be the best approach when working in low-income communities where residents may face other challenges that can take priority over healthy eating.

Although many behavior changes occur most effectively when implemented in incremental steps over a long period of time, the nature of grant-funded projects with finite durations can make this challenging. The Healthy Eating by Design partnerships had the flexibility to adjust strategies and timelines to meet their communities' needs and respond to emerging opportunities, particularly in the policy arena.

Healthy foods must be affordable, practical and familiar to children and families in low-income and culturally diverse communities.

Families are more likely to try new meals if they don't cost more, are quick and easy to prepare, and use familiar foods. All of the Healthy Eating by Design partnerships realized the value of working with children and families on their own terms, and balanced more idealistic definitions of healthy foods with incremental and manageable behavior changes.

Partnerships need to have a clear, shared definition and vision of healthy eating within the context of the project goals and target population.

Partners' personal values about eating behaviors should not take precedence or bias the messages and strategies that will be most meaningful and effective in reaching the target population.

Children can be the best and most influential messengers to encourage healthy eating changes for parents and families.

Actively engaging parents was challenging for all of the Healthy Eating by Design projects. However, the projects found that personal contact and hands-on educational opportunities could be effective in reaching the families.

Evaluation tools can help build the evidence for promising community-based, healthy eating strategies that are not burdensome to schools or partnerships.

Evaluation was not a required component of the Healthy Eating by Design project, though some partnerships stated that information related to their projects' impact would have been useful as they sought resources to continue and disseminate their work. However, all of the partnerships were successful in securing resources or identifying partners to institutionalize and continue best practices from their Healthy Eating by Design projects.

Demonstration projects led by community partnerships are sound investments in identifying promising strategies to address the childhood obesity epidemic.

Expanding some Active Living by Design partnerships in order to address healthy eating enabled partnerships to build upon their experience and skill in implementing policy and environmental change, and capitalized upon their understanding of their communities. Such understanding made it easier for the healthy eating partnerships to serve low-income populations in their communities.

Resources

Active Living by Design: www.activelivingbydesign.org

Active Living by Design helps communities increase routine physical activity and healthy eating through changes in policy and community design. Active Living by Design offers technical assistance and strategic consultation to communities, professionals, nonprofit agencies and philanthropic organizations across the United States.

Healthy Eating by Design: www.activelivingbydesign.org/hebd

The Healthy Eating by Design pilot project provided 18 months of funding and technical assistance to 12 of the 25 Active Living by Design community partnerships to test approaches to provide affordable, healthy and appealing food options in low-income communities where children live, learn and play. A second phase of this initiative provides one year of funding and technical assistance to four Healthy Eating by Design community partnerships to support the development and implementation of dissemination and sustainability strategies.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: www.rwjf.org

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. Helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need—the Foundation expects to make a difference in our lifetime.

Food Stamp Program: www.fns.usda.gov/fsp

The Food Stamp Program of the United States Department of Agriculture helps lower income persons and families buy nutritious foods.

Migrant Health Promotion: www.migranthealth.org/our_programs/who_are_promotora.php

Promotores and Promotoras are community members who promote health in their own communities. They provide leadership, peer education and resources to support community empowerment or capacitación.

National School Lunch Program: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch

The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.

North American Food Policy Council: www.foodsecurity.org/FPC

The Community Food Security Coalition National Food Policy Council Program is designed to support the development and operation of current and emerging food policy councils.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children: www.fns.usda.gov/wic

The federally funded WIC Special Supplemental Nutrition Program provides supplemental foods, health care referrals and nutrition education at no cost to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding post-partum women, and to infants and children up to 5 years of age, who are found to be at nutritional risk.



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