

Characteristics of Successful Healthy Eating and Active Living Projects in Missouri

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BACKGROUND

The Healthy & Active Communities (H&AC) initiative is a multi-site initiative funded by the Missouri Foundation for Health. Projects implement multiple strategies to promote healthy eating and physical activity in their local communities.

Example strategies include:

 **built environment changes** (e.g., bike paths)

 **advocacy and policy changes** (e.g., communicating with policymakers, adopting worksite wellness policies)

 **community engagement** (e.g., educational campaigns)

This poster examines strategies employed by the most successful projects to inform funders, researchers, and practitioners of potential promising practices to promote or support future obesity prevention efforts.

METHODS

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 23 healthy eating and active living projects in Missouri, in connection with an initiative-level evaluation.

Upon completion, projects were assessed across three indicators using established criteria. Projects needed to meet or exceed the typical proportion of objectives met (63%), demonstrate behavior or attitude/knowledge change, and engage more types of partners than typical (n=6) (e.g., schools, healthcare providers, community-based organizations).

Success indicators

- 1 Met project objectives**
- 2 Changed behavior or attitude/knowledge**
- 3 Formed multi-sectoral partnerships**

Projects were classified as highly successful if they met all three criteria (n=6), moderately successful if they met one or two criteria (n=14), and classified as achieving a low level of success if no criteria were met (n=3).

RESULTS

Highly successful projects were more likely to utilize several strategies not systematically employed by less successful projects. For example, highly successful projects:

Successful projects:



Targeted multiple sources of influence

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- Implemented changes to *both healthy eating and physical activity environments* (e.g., built gardens, improved access to physical activity equipment)
- Incorporated *interpersonal components* into educational and programming activities (e.g., walking buddies, health counselors)



Formed diverse and engaged partnerships

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- Engaged twice as many *types of partners* (8 versus 4)
- Engaged partners types that do *not typically identify as focusing on obesity prevention* (e.g., local businesses, local governments)
- Relied on partners to contribute a broader range of supports, including *content expertise* outside of nutrition and physical activity (e.g., evaluation, advocacy)



Implemented sustainable practices

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- Implemented *environment changes*
- Implemented strategies that *successfully changed behavior* in target populations (e.g., increased physical activity)
- *Combined several sustainability strategies* (e.g., adopted written policies, secured additional funds)

NEXT STEPS

The findings indicate that utilization of certain strategies may contribute to project success. Funders, grant writers, and practitioners should consider ways to promote these strategies, such as:

Encourage project designs that require **multiple spheres of influence** (e.g., schools, neighborhoods), as well as **multiple levels within each sphere** (e.g., individuals, peer groups).

Design projects/interventions to engage **multi-sectoral partnerships** and have **partners support** various aspects of project implementation and sustainability.

Assess projects' capacity for **sustainability across a range of organizational and contextual factors** at multiple time points, to plan for and assess sustainability throughout the duration of projects. For example, projects can use the Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (<https://sustaintool.org>).

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