

Partnering4Health Communication Activities

As part of the Partnering4Health project, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) selected three national organizations -- [the American Heart Association](#) (AHA), the [American Planning Association](#) (APA), and the [National WIC Association](#) (NWA) -- to work with 96 communities and address one or two priorities for improving their population's health: improved access to healthy foods and beverages, more access to physical activity opportunities, more smoke-free environments, and improved access to clinical preventive services. CDC funded two additional national organizations -- the [Directors of Health Promotion and Education](#) (DHPE) and the [Society for Public Health Education](#) (SOPHE) to coordinate national and regional external communication and facilitate communication among the Partnering4Health partners.

Each national organization used communication and dissemination strategies for increasing awareness and dialogue on tobacco use and exposure, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and the lack of access to chronic disease prevention, risk reduction, or management opportunities that affect the health of the nation. The organizations used their and their partners' existing distribution channels (e.g., newsletters, websites, social media, email blasts, conferences, forums, existing publications, etc.) to reach their members, chapters/affiliates, partners, stakeholders, decision makers and other audiences. They incorporated chronic disease prevention and community health awareness opportunities into existing national activities and events (e.g., conventions, conferences, regional meetings). They disseminated CDC-offered media messages or public service announcements to key audiences (public, partners, and stakeholders), included a program-focused article in their publications, and created national organization success stories. Each organization has communication professionals within their national office and they leveraged those resources for this project. AHA, APA, and NWA also worked with their local communities to develop and disseminate local success stories.

DHPE and SOPHE developed and implemented a communication plan to increase awareness among multiple audiences (e.g., arts/entertainment, business/labor, civic/social, education, faith, health, media, foundations, and others) about community health chronic disease prevention strategies. That communication plan included national health observances as a monthly focus, with each national organization taking turns to create a communication package for that health observance.

Communities used media channels for bringing attention to their work and recruiting participation for specific events and opportunities. Tactics included securing time on local talk shows, sending email blasts, using social media, and purchasing radio advertising. Participants appreciated the

value of a communication focus and the ability to devote resources for planning and implementing communication strategies.

Some communities had little or no experience communicating with the public about their work while others had communications departments. The national organizations involved in the Partnering4Health had entire communication departments. The national organizations' communication departments shared their communication resources and expertise to the project and helped less resourced communities create and disseminate compelling messages. Some of those messages are on the [Partnering4Health website](#).

The types of social media used in the project included [Facebook](#), Instagram, [blogs](#), [YouTube](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and Pandora. Hootsuite was used to post messages on more than one social media platform at specific times. Some communities found social media very successful; others found its success was limited to keeping partners informed or reaching specific demographics. Although social media was generally more effective at reaching younger audiences, Facebook and LinkedIn attracted more mature audiences. Some projects found that using paid advertising Facebook tools to boost their presence increased engagement significantly.

With the use of [social media](#), data analytics helped determine whether specific communication channels and messages reached the intended audiences. Available information included time spent on a page, click throughs, and online purchases. One project reported success using [Geofencing](#) to define geographical areas and obtain information about specific audiences of interest.

With traditional media, visuals, such as pictures and images, often caught audience attention. Communities used communication funds to develop logos, [websites](#), [blogs](#), community calendars, [trail maps](#), and revise media [toolkits](#) as well as boost and target social media messages. For example, Beaverton Oregon [gained local news coverage](#) for its AHA project to increase physical activity in schools. The Greater Helena, Montana APA project created [new signage for trails](#) that encouraged participation by people of all abilities.

Based on 2009 data about the effectiveness of the [Live a More Colorful Life](#) campaign that promoted fruits and vegetables, Tarrant County's project refreshed the campaign to quickly launch a multipronged campaign using text messages, posters, flyers, door hangers, mural, and a referenced website that referred people to participating stores.

Many community participants learned the basics of marketing and social marketing through this project – knowledge they will be able to leverage in the future. At the final culminating meeting of the project, many community representatives expressed appreciation for the ability to devote human and fiscal resources to communication efforts, which they felt helped their agency or organization gain local recognition and move the project forward.

Community members in Tarrant County, Texas (APA) designed and created this mural to bring attention to the fresh produce available at a farmers market.

