

Partnering4Health
Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Approach to
Improving Access to Healthy Food and Beverage Using Farmers' Markets and Mobile Markets

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, or improved access to clinical preventive services.

There is growing recognition that major public health problems will not be solved solely by individual actions and healthy choices, but by coming together to forge a society where healthy choices can be made more easily. Policy, systems and environmental (PSE) change represents a new way of thinking about how to effectively improve health in a community. PSE approaches seek to go beyond interventions focused on individual behavior to influence the systems that create the structures in which we work, live, and play. By changing laws and shaping physical landscapes, a big impact can be made with little time and resources. By changing policies, systems, and/or the environment, communities can tackle health issues such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic diseases.

Policy, systems, and environmental change is a way of modifying the environment to make healthy choices practical and available to all community members.

Policy Change	Systems Change	Environmental Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy change includes the passing of laws, ordinances, resolutions, mandates, regulations, or rules. ▪ Policies greatly influence the choices we make in our lives. Laws that are passed (like workplace policies, school policies) greatly influence the daily decisions we make about our health. ▪ Examples: Adding a tax on unhealthy food, passing a law allowing residents to plant community gardens in vacant lots, schools establishing a policy that prohibits junk food in school fundraising drives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ System change involves change made to the rules within an organization. Systems change and policy change often work hand-in-hand. ▪ Systems change impacts all elements of an organization. Often systems change focuses on changing infrastructure within a school, park, worksite or health setting. ▪ Examples: Creating a community plan to account for health impacts of new projects, creating a certification system for school bake sales to ensure they are in line with school wellness policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental change is a change made to the physical environment. ▪ Environmental change can be as simple as installing bike signage on already established bike routes or as complex as sidewalk installation and pedestrian friendly intersections to promote walking and biking among its citizens. ▪ Examples: Municipality undertakes a planning process to ensure better pedestrian and bicycle access to main roads and parks; community development includes neighborhood corridors with pedestrian accommodations meeting the needs of seniors (e.g. adequate benches and ramped sidewalks).

Adapted from Cook County Public Health: <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/files/cppw/pse%20change.pdf>

Communities funded through the Partnering4Health project chose to work on one or more priority areas and focused their PSE approaches on a range of activities (Table 1). In many places, residents lack access to fruits and vegetables, but can find tobacco, non-nutritious foods and beverages, and alcohol all too easily. And perhaps not surprisingly, tobacco use, poor nutrition, and excessive alcohol use are among the leading causes of deadly illness in the United States. As a result, many of the

Table 1: Priority Areas Communities Selected, by NGO

Strategy	AHA	APA	NWA
Healthy Foods & Beverages	30	21	32
Physical Activity	11	27	0
Smoke-free Environments	6	0	0
Clinical Linkages	0	0	32

funded communities chose to work on promoting access to healthy foods from farmers' markets and mobile markets. Among these communities, 8 AHA communities, 4 APA communities, and 9 NWA communities chose to focus their PSE activities on increasing access to healthy foods found at farmers' markets and other types of mobile food markets.

"Sometimes, the difference in making more healthful choices boils down to access and convenience. Teaming up with Nourish allows us to help break down those kinds of barriers and increase opportunities for healthier outcomes for all."

Denise Day, CEO of the YMCA of Greater Brandywine (partner with AHA's Chester County, PA project)

Some communities worked with existing farmers markets to increase awareness of their location and hours, to offer education about preparing and cooking fresh produce, and to change market hours to make markets more accessible to community members. Communities that worked with mobile markets or food trucks helped them advertise their availability, navigate competitiveness issues with for-profit food sources, and address policy barriers. Several WIC agencies helped vendors navigate redemption of WIC or EBT SNAP food vouchers. In one community, farmers who were reluctant to participate in a farm stand in front of a WIC clinic found that both WIC clients and clinic neighbors were excellent patrons and farmers soon vied to participate. Some communities found it necessary to extend the number of days and hours that farmers' markets and mobile markets were available.

Communities used a variety of strategies to advertise and promote the markets. One community partnered with a local university to create an app to describe WIC benefits and help locate farmers' markets. Other communities created banners for the city to display on market days, created a county-wide farmer's market guide in Spanish that included a map displaying the locations of farmers'

markets and information about seasonal produce, and changed market times to coincide with other weekly community events that attracted crowds. Where an [ordinance](#) restricted food truck parking, a variance for areas deemed "food deserts" provided increased access to fresh produce grown by and purchased from local farmers. A farm stand offering free produce coordinated their hours with school pick-up times to boost participation and remove stigma associated with of going to a stand. One community created a scavenger hunt for children attending the farmers market and it helped to increase sales of featured healthy food choices.

"Bringing the market to the child care center not only offers easier access for parents, but is also an opportunity to help young children connect with where their food comes from and build healthy preferences."

Kristin McCartney, Public Health Specialist and SNAP-Ed Coordinator for West Virginia University Extension (partner with AHA's West Virginia project)