Boston’s Healthy Community Champions

Partnering with residents and community organizations as neighborhood experts in a city-wide project to increase opportunities for active transportation.

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Let’s Get Healthy, Boston!  
Boston Partnerships to Improve Community Health

- Led by Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) in partnership with the Boston Alliance for Community Health (BACH)
  - 21 subcontracted partners: City agencies, Community-based orgs, Universities
- Implementation of voluntary **policy, systems and environmental** changes to encourage healthy choices in physical activity, nutrition and tobacco control. (3 years: 2014-2017)
- Project focused city-wide with priority populations in two of Boston’s underserved neighborhoods, and a goal to reach 75% of the City population.

Let’s Get Healthy, Boston!  
Eat well. Be active. Go smoke free.  
A Partnership to Improve Community Health Initiative
Project Goals

- Increase the number of Boston residents who have access to:
  - Neighborhood pharmacies and stores that promote healthy beverages
  - Affordable neighborhood farmers markets
  - Smoke free rental units
  - Opportunities for bicycling in their neighborhoods
  - Safe Routes to Schools programs
Role of the local health department & community coalition

• BPHC provided leadership, coordination & implementation
• BACH is a diverse city-wide partnership of neighborhood coalitions and community-based partners
  • Designed, coordinated and managed community engagement for the project: Healthy Community Champions program
Boston’s Healthy Community Champions (HCC)
HCC Program Goals

• Build citywide support to achieve Let’s Get Healthy, Boston project's overall goals
• Build capacity among residents, by providing training in health issues & engagement skills
• Promote cross-neighborhood collaboration and learning opportunities
• Building a sustainable set of voices from the community that are knowledgeable and vocal supporters for healthy communities
HCC Program Structure

• Policy, Systems & Environmental Change through:
  • Training & Capacity Building
  • Coaching & Mentorship
  • Cross-Neighborhood Communication & Collaboration
  • Compensating Participation
HCC Program Inputs

• Large budget (30% of total grant budget; $500-600k/year)
• 12 community based organizations, 12 coordinators, 75 HCCs
• Priority areas were pre-determined by PICH grant
• Paid $15 an hour for up to 5 hours a week
HCC Roles

• Engage and rally other residents
• Educate city councilors and other policy makers
• Health education at community events
• Model and communicate
• Provide testimony
• Inform the city wide communications campaign
• Distribute information
Project Outcomes and HCC Contributions
Bicycling- Active transportation

Goal: Increase opportunities for active transportation in the neighborhoods

• Accomplishments & Wins
  • Promoted Boston’s bike share program’s low income membership; the $5/yr memberships increased by 150%
  • Low-income membership access points grew from 1 location to 7.
  • Each HCC group took on a project to promote bicycling in their neighborhoods
  • 3 HCCs became licensed bike instructors and were trained in bicycle repair. These were the first 3 non-white bike instructors in MetroBoston and the first in Roxbury and Mattapan.
  • Promoted #IBikeBOS Communication campaign & Inter-neighborhood ride series
  • Supported planning the first “Boston Neighborhood Bike Forum”
Additional HCC contributions

• Unprecedented neighborhood collaboration
• Strengthened BACH’s relationships with 10 community based organizations including “non-health-specific” organizations and a faith-based organization.
• Trained 100 residents on leadership, community engagement and advocacy,
• Federal funding: Time + Funding= Innovation
• Street cred, authentic voice
• Increased the health department’s capacity to engage the community and adapt PSE strategies to work more effectively in neighborhoods.
Challenges and lessons learned

- Nuances of working across the city and in district neighborhoods
- Interpersonal & interorganizational dynamics
- Project team adapting to decentralized leadership with diverse expertise
- Relationship and trust building between “government” and residents
- 3 years of funding allowed for innovation and course correction
Meet the HCCs

• https://youtu.be/6X7l6MJEQd0atch?
Any clarification questions? Thank you.