

STEP 6 - EVALUATION

STEP 6: EVALUATING MY INITIATIVE: IS IT DOING ANY GOOD?

At the beginning of this resource kit we listed reasons for having a Active Community Environments (ACEs) initiative. That list included higher physical activity levels, better physical health, a decreased number of chronic diseases and reduced health care costs. In setting up your ACEs initiative, you need to also think about how you are going to evaluate your initiative. Evaluation will provide you with information to modify your initiative to better meet your community's needs and to measure whether you are making any impact on behaviors and health indicators as a result of your initiative. Start thinking about evaluation measures as you do your initial assessment. Consider how you would measure results as you narrow your focus to specific initiative strategies based on your review of the 79 questions in the assessment checklist. Although you don't have to evaluate every aspect of your ACEs initiative, you do want to have some specific evaluation measures clearly defined so you can figure out if your initiative is making a difference.

Types of Evaluation

You can measure process and you can measure outcome (or impact). Both are important and should be used. Process indicators will be easier to measure and will give you quicker feedback on how well your initiative is being accepted and used by members of the community. Examples of process measures are:

- ❖ Number of citizens enrolled and participating (participation rates) in community events or programs.
- ❖ Web site hits.
- ❖ Observation or counts (ex. track number walking or biking on a trail)
- ❖ Participant satisfaction (via survey, focus groups, interviews, stakeholder survey, etc.)
- ❖ Number of new developments with sidewalks or existing neighborhoods that are retrofitted with sidewalks.
- ❖ Number of miles of new trails.
- ❖ Number of miles of roads with bike lanes.
- ❖ Other policy or environmental changes/tracking (compare list of policy or environmental changes from initial site assessment using the ACEs Assessment Checklist with later follow-up at 1 year, 2 years, etc.)
- ❖ Bus or mass transit ridership
- ❖ Number of schools with walk-to-school or Safe Routes programs.
- ❖ Number of students participating in walk-to-school or Safe Routes programs.
- ❖ Population density and mixed land use neighborhoods
- ❖ Park acres per capita.

Outcome evaluation can be more difficult and takes longer to show up in your data. However, outcome measures provide you with data on your ultimate goal: more active and healthier citizens. Examples of outcome measures are:

- ❖ Use of community survey data already collected (see Step 3 for existing data sources) tracked across multiple years.
- ❖ Pre/Post community surveys specific to your initiative – Can measure changes in attitude, knowledge and current physical activity and mental health status from an initial assessment to completion of a specified program or campaign
- ❖ Health Indicators / reduced risk factors.

Outcome or impact evaluation needs to clearly identify the marker being addressed and have the baseline data for comparison to determine the impact or outcome. One example would be to compare last year's self-reported physical activity levels with the level after the ACEs initiative is in place.

Illustrated below is a sample evaluation scorecard to illustrate one way to quantify your results for both process and outcome measures.

SAMPLE EVALUATION TOOL & MEASURES			
SAMPLE PROCESS OBJECTIVES	2008	2009	Change
Number of people enrolled and participating (participation rates).	200	220	↑ 10%
Active Community web site hits	10,620	22,000	↑ 107%
Observation or counts (ex. track number using a trail)	60	75	↑ 25%
Participant satisfaction (via survey, focus groups, interviews, stakeholder survey, etc.)	72%	80%	↑ 8%
Policy or environmental changes/tracking (Use the ACEs Assessment Checklist and compare the list of policy or environmental changes from initial site assessment with later follow-up at 1 year, 2 years, etc.)	10 in place	15 in place	↑ 50%
SAMPLE OUTCOME OBJECTIVES	2005	2006	Change
Pre/Post test surveys – Can measure changes in attitude, knowledge and current eating, physical activity and mental health status from an initial assessment to completion of a specified program or campaign.	Average score = 65	Average score = 80	↑ 15%
Vending items being chosen in public food settings i.e. parks, recreation facilities, etc. (arrange with vendor to track selections)	25% Healthy choice	35% Healthy choice	↑ 10%
Cafeteria menu options in public food settings i.e. parks, recreation facilities, etc.	35% Healthy choice	40% Healthy choice	↑ 5%
Health Indicators / reduced risk factors. Comparison of community aggregate screening measures such as blood pressure, cholesterol, body weight, BMI, etc. As an alternative, use any available self-reported data.	BP = 140/100 Chol = 225 BMI = 30%	BP = 130/90 Chol = 212 BMI = 29%	↓ BP ↓ 6% ↓ 1%

No matter what or how you do evaluation, you should have some type of “scorecard” to regularly evaluate results.

