

# Leading **Healthy** Communities: Action Guide

## Overview

Communities across the country have made great strides to improve the health of local citizens. Several communities, like Buncombe County, North Carolina, are providing every resident with access to health care. Others, like Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania have cut the death rate among infants in half. Still others, like rural communities in Montana, have come together to stem new drug abuse threats like methamphetamine.

Such good news never grows old. It fills us with optimism. Best of all, it can inspire us to take action ourselves.

But how do people succeed? Is it just luck? Perhaps rare and talented leaders are behind it? Sometimes, yes, but there are proven methods that can help everyone to succeed. It takes a little know-how and a whole lot of work. Your effort will be all the more rewarding (and fun) if you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

This guide offers a simple, step-by-step approach to getting the job done. It is written to help you make a difference in the health of people in your community. It will show you how others have done it. And it will point you in the right direction—with tools and resources to help you get started, organize and manage your project, and sustain success.

It is written with community organizer “beginners” in mind, but it also offers those with more experience some additional information and insights. The purpose of the guide is to give you the confidence and knowledge to go out into your community and make a difference. Remember many health care issues are complex and can seem daunting. Think big but start small. Small doesn't mean accomplishing little or nothing. It means focusing on the details.

Remember, as the famous anthropologist, Margaret Mead, wrote: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

This guide owes its content to many sources. The Community Tool Box created by the University of Kansas (<http://ctb.ku.edu/>) provides an extensive and comprehensive set of resources. The experience of Wye River Group on Healthcare ([www.wrgh.org](http://www.wrgh.org)) in 12 communities across the country informed much about the process of organizing community action. The Kettering Foundation provides valuable information about hosting community discussions, engaging the public in making choices, and sustaining leadership over time. This list just represents a few!

## Pearls of Wisdom

The second section of the guide is a collection of “**Pearls of Wisdom**” that let you benefit from the experience of community organizers who have come before you. Someone else has already made all the mistakes!

The path of community action has been well trod by many people before you. You have every reason to expect to find others who can help in many different ways. The advice below will give you a start on what others have learned when working together effectively. We have organized these recommendations for effective community collaboration under seven topical areas.

## Vision, Mission & Objectives

- **Be clear and specific about your mission and goals.** You will make a bigger difference when you can articulate what you intend to achieve. It will help those who are already involved in your effort and others who might want to join or help later. For example, organizations external to the community partnership might help objectively frame the goals or help identify the best community level indicators. A goal might be increasing childhood immunization rates or decreasing sexually transmitted diseases among youth. You will know it is specific enough if it leads to concrete action.
- **Set realistic goals.** Community efforts often promise more than they can deliver, especially when they seek grant money. Leaders want to make the best possible impression to secure the most funding. If goals don't challenge the community, then they won't inspire the effort, funding, and other resources that will drive needed change. But setting unrealistic goals sets up the effort for a sense of failure no matter how far it has come. Goals should be challenging, but they should also be achievable.

## Action Planning

- **Look for issues that affect people in many different ways.** That's where the needs are and that's where you gain widespread interest. Some community issues, for example, neighborhood safety or substance abuse, affect the majority of people who share a common place. They also offer a solid basis around which a critical mass of local people can work together. When community organization efforts involve people from diverse backgrounds of income and power –such as educational or public health improvements affecting people across social class –substantive change is a lot more likely to happen.
- **Consider using more than one strategy.** It's easy to get stuck tackling complex problems like obesity using one tactic when other tactics, or several tactics simultaneously, may work better. You won't know unless you try different approaches. A change in strategy by itself can also be helpful because the disruption may lead everyone involved to take a fresh look at the problem.
- **Be creative.** There may have already been dozens of projects to solve the problems you want to address, but you have to find the right way to do it where you live. You'll have to be creative about looking at the problem and finding ways to apply ideas to your community. A particularly creative idea by itself can contribute to success. Consider how much the wristbands helped Lance Armstrong's foundation fundraising.

- **Provide incentives for success.** Funders may be more likely to support your effort if you give yourself an incentive to make progress. For example, the annual renewal of multi-year awards or the offering of bonus grants could be based on evidence of progress or accomplishment by the community group.
- **Try for quick wins.** Quick wins are short-term opportunities that can make a clear-cut difference. They may not complete your goal, but they build confidence that you can get it done. Quick, small successes can also help recruit and retrain members as word of the success spreads.

## Leadership

- **Leaders help set the right direction.** *“Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results,”* as George Patton once said. Once you can help a group of people see a new direction, they will have little trouble going that way.
- **Community organization can't always be separated from politics or controversy.** Consider the case of people coming together in a rural community to address issues of toxic waste and environmental pollution. Public debate may focus on both the economic interests of affected businesses and the health concerns of local residents. It's typical that when two parties are on opposite sides of an issue, neither will get everything they want. Inevitably, a resolution is going to involve politics: the art of reconciling or balancing competing interests.
- **Opposition to change may be like an onion.** According to the Community Tool Box, community efforts dealing with entrenched, controversial problems will encounter many layers of opposition and resistance to change. For example, community efforts to limit indoor air pollution like smoking may face resistance initially from the tobacco industry and then later from bar and restaurant owners. You need to peel off one layer at a time, and expect to find deeper layers of resistance that are created to protect vested interests.

Reports from high-level groups that get a lot of attention create a chance to try something new in the community. The nationwide program Healthy Start, which aims to reduce infant deaths, got its start from a national level task force. A task force gathers a group of leaders together and enables them to set a new direction that none of them might come up with on their own. The task force group may give them “cover” to say things they might not have been able to say on their own. And it may stimulate ideas that would they would not come up with individual. High profile reports can also analyze the causes of societal problems that are often too complex for any single individual to tackle herself. You might work to create a high level commission to address the problem you want to tackle or keep an eye open for opportunities generated by a national task force.

- **Be concrete.** As community consultant Gillian Kaye says: *“Nothing loses steam and involvement faster for a coalition than a lot of talking and no action. Coming up with broad ideas is one thing, but actually developing concrete strategies and getting them implemented is quite another.”*

## Collaboration

- **You can't do it by yourself.** One person or even a few people cannot solve the complex problems facing society in the areas of health and health care alone. They need a diverse group of local people to tackle the interwoven relationships that under gird any complex problem. Joining people together in a common purpose can strengthen a community more than any other way because it enables community members to take action themselves.
- **Collaborate to expand your reach.** There's a good chance that someone in your community is already concerned for one reason or another about the problem you've identified. The local hospital may be concerned about highway safety because accidents send uninsured motorists to the emergency room with no ability to pay the bills. Consider "non-traditional" or non-obvious allies in your initiative.
- **Involve faith-based and racially/ethnically diverse community organizations.** Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and many other diverse faiths are often active in communities and help shape our beliefs about what is right and good, such as our responsibility to care for others. Ensuring the poor, the sick, and the disabled in our communities can get the health care they need to live better lives requires us to serve more than just ourselves. Achieving reasonable equity requires us to devote ourselves to a higher purpose than the basic demands of life.

## Adequate Resources

- **Seek resources to engage community mobilizers.** Community mobilizers will focus their energy on getting the community involved in your effort. Paid mobilizers are often necessary because getting people involved is usually a full time job. They can sustain an organization through times when volunteers cannot devote enough time or even when enthusiasm runs short. They can also multiply themselves by recruiting volunteers to get even more done.
- **Don't hesitate to seek technical assistance.** Most initiatives rely on volunteers with full time jobs without adequate time and skills to devote to the many details like developing written plans, tracking activities, and designing outcome measurements. Successfully executing on these tasks takes specialized knowledge, a lot of time and self-discipline. Indeed, these obstacles can dampen enthusiasm, even for those truly committed to making a difference. Community initiative organizers should not be afraid to admit they need outside help and seek it as part of their funding needs.
- **When fundraising, do not think you are merely asking for money or a grant.** You are asking as an advocate on behalf of those who are in need. Your enthusiasm will replenish itself if you see yourself as a direct conduit to the needs in the community you are serving.

## Documentation & Feedback

- **Keep records and feedback.** Key records include a description of what the group has done and how they have done it. This history lets new members of the group get up to speed more quickly. Seeing the progress can inspire old and new members to work even harder. Records are also very important to maintaining an accurate evaluation of what worked and what didn't.

## Making Outcomes Matter

- **Focus on outcomes.** For those who want to make a difference, it's nice to know that you actually did. Getting results will help your group feel better about itself and attract others to your cause. Set measurable targets so you can teach and show others about your success and communicate results.
- **Can you replicate your success?** Once you've had some success, ask yourself if you can help others. Finding the "DNA" of your success will help sustain your own initiative and allow others to benefit as well.
- **Make sure you can demonstrate you are the cause of your own success.** When you evaluate your effort, ask yourselves if there could be another reason for your success. With enough time and money, you can conduct scientific research by comparing the effect on one group of people who receive your assistance with another control group who receives nothing from you. That way you can tell if your intervention is making a real difference. Often such research is not possible, but with some common sense and analysis, you can help make the point that you are indeed the cause of the impact you see.
- **Make sure you have a sustainable project.** All the success in the world doesn't guarantee your initiative will be around next year if funding dries up. As your success builds, you will have a better chance to secure funding streams based on the continuing value of the project.

## **The ABC's of Working Together: Five Basic Steps**

This section provides “**The ABCs of Working Together**” in your community to improve health, as well as examples of successful approaches to each step.

The health problems that we share as a society are no different from any other common problem in our society. Whether the topic is AIDS or traffic jams, any public discussion can draw out feelings of anger, frustration, and hopelessness. But tension and conflict are the threads that lead to solutions. Just as parents explain lessons to their children, we as citizens have to come together to learn and grow.

There are lots of ways to describe how to collaborate. This section gives you a simple approach to collaboration without being too simplistic. More details and the sources of information for each step in this process are provided later in the Guide.

### **Step One: Talk about the Problem**

Have you ever been in a meeting where people complain, but no one is willing to do anything about it? That’s frustrating, but it’s often the first step towards a solution. Nothing will change unless people see a reason for it. You have to turn whining into winning!

There’s a lot to worry about when it comes to health and health care. How do you know if your concern should be a priority or if there’s anything you can do about it?

One way to find out is to ask others what they think. Talk about the problem. Involve local leaders with diverse areas of expertise such as providers, hospitals, and health plans, industry trade and professional organizations, business, government, and consumer advocacy groups. Ask what do other people think should be the priority?

### **Align Interests to Promote a Healthy Community**

Talking about a problem will go farther if you have some good information about local problems and resources. You really don’t want to pursue an issue where there’s no real need anymore or where you would be duplicating the efforts of others working on the same issues.

There are many sources of information about local health problems and how they compare on a national scale. But you may need to collect more information yourself. Once you know the issue you want to address, you need to consider who might already have a hand in the problem and have information about it. For example, your state or county health department may have staff with many years experience addressing a specific health issues. Many organizations routinely conduct community health assessments. It is useful to approach them with an open attitude of wanting to learn about the work they are already doing. The example below describes how concerned individuals came together to address mental health concerns in San Antonio, Texas:

### **Case Study Example I: Talk about the Problem**

#### **[A Community-Based Jail Diversion Program for Persons with Mental Illness](#) **The Center for Health Care Services - San Antonio, Texas****

When Leon Evans became the executive director of the Center for Health Care Services (CHCS) in April 2000, the San Antonio mental health system was struggling to meet consumer demand and law enforcement and hospital emergency rooms were shouldering the extra burden. Law enforcement officers routinely waited an average of 12 hours for an emergency room psychological evaluation of a detainee.

In response, CHCS officials and County Judge John Specia, Jr. convened stakeholders to talk about the problem and develop strategies for serving community members with mental illnesses. The diverse group of stakeholders included representatives from law enforcement and the court system such as the local police chief, the sheriff, probate judges and county clerks, as well as mental health care consumers and their family members. The group's discussions generated short- and long-term strategies such as crisis intervention training, jail diversion programs and a crisis service "triage" center. The initial model the group developed has expanded and stands as a national model of excellence in the area of community mental health services.

By simply convening a diverse group of stakeholders to "talk about a problem," the group was able to generate creative and effective solutions.

### **Conduct a Needs Assessment**

If your group chooses to conduct a needs assessment, the following section provides step-by-step assistance:

#### **A Checklist for Community Needs Assessments**

- Describe the makeup and history of the community to provide a context within which to collect data on its current concerns.
- Consider the kind of information that best describes your community (e.g., demographic, historical, political, civic involvement, local leaders, or geography.)
- Use a variety of methods to collect information (e.g. interviews, observation, or data analysis.)
- Make a list of questions based on discussions with local leaders and community members.
- Illustrate the issues of concern to people in the community.
- Determine priority issues.
- Identify barriers or resistance to solving the problem.
- Describe the resources available to problem solving efforts.
- List solutions and alternatives posted by community members and stakeholders.
- Identify community level indicators; an incidence of behaviors or events that relate to the issues of concern (e.g. for healthcare access collect information on uninsured rates in different populations and the availability of primary care and specialty services.)
- Describe the resources available for other community projects that may be underway that help address this issue and how they could be used.

**Source:** <http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/assesscommunity/narrativeoutline.jsp>

The example below describes how a group in Roanoke Valley, Virginia conducted a needs assessment to identify the scope of a problem and help them craft effective solutions:

### ***Case Study Example II: Conducting a Community Needs Assessment***

#### ***Child Health Investment Partnership (CHIP), Roanoke Valley, Virginia***

The Child Health Investment Partnership (CHIP) of Roanoke Valley is designed to ensure low-income children living in the Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area age birth through six have access to comprehensive health care. Pediatrician Douglas Pierce founded the program in 1999 after seeing a growing number of low-income children with severe and untreated health problems in his practice.

Dr. Pierce recognized that he must first understand the needs of his target population before developing a plan of action. Through a community needs assessment analysis, program developers learned that besides health care access, low-income families lacked the resources and education for preventive measures, proper nutrition, transportation to health care centers, follow-up medications, and on-going treatment. Without these supports, otherwise innocuous medical conditions escalated into serious health concerns. This additional information helped program developers establish services to support these families and provide children with the health care they need.

The program has been an overwhelming success and served many low-income children in the Roanoke Valley area.

## **Obtain Community Health Data**

Whether you are writing a report, making a speech, or simply trying to assess the situation in your community, the following list of possible sources can help you make your case:

- *The state or county health department* can help you determine health indicators on a variety of issues.
- *The state human service department* should be able to tell you the number of recipients of Medicaid, and food stamp program participants.
- *Hospital admission and exit records* can give you information on teen fertility, causes of death, etc. Depending on where you live, some of the data may not be part of the public record, but it may be possible to purchase some of it, or arrange to use it in some form.
- *Census data:* Demographic information is available for your community and the United States as a whole on Bureau of Census web site: <http://www.census.gov>. Many states have similar information on their own web sites as well.
- *National, state and community level cancer incidence, mortality, and risk behavior data* can be found at: [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org), [www.statecancerprofiles.cancer.gov](http://www.statecancerprofiles.cancer.gov), and [cancercontrolplanet.cancer.gov](http://cancercontrolplanet.cancer.gov)
- *Police records* can tell you crime rates and the incidence of problems such as domestic violence or motor vehicle accidents.
- *Chamber of Commerce data* discusses job growth, the unemployment rate, etc.
- *Nonprofit service agencies*, such as the United Way, generally have records on a variety of different issues. Often, these agencies have already conducted surveys and may have found the information you need.
- *School districts* are a handy source for graduation rates, test scores, and truancy rates for your school as well as other schools. For comparative figures across school districts, they



often have information on absenteeism, health status, nutritional needs, etc, check with your state department of education.

- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* reportable disease files can give you national information on the rates of many diseases, such as AIDS. Its' web site is located at: <http://www.cdc.gov>.
- *Your reference librarian* is often a very helpful person.
- *Other professional contacts* you have can lead you to sources of information particular to your interest. Think about health related organizations: health insurance companies, local or national medical societies, or COMMUNITY pharmacists all may have useful ideas.
- *Statistical Abstract of the United States* is a good general source in print for national information. It's done annually, and is available in most local libraries.
- *Specialized local, statewide, or national organizations* may help. For example, if you were interested in Alzheimer's disease, or lead poisoning, you would want to track down and consult with an organization specializing in that field. (Gale's Encyclopedia of Associations is a good national source). Many such organizations have good web sites of their own, too.
- Many *web pages* not listed above may now exist with the information you are looking for. For some of the best, see the section of the University of Kansas's Community Tool Box entitled *Connections and Links*, found under *Community Building Tools*.
- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Wonder*. This database provides a single way for to search a wide variety of reports and public health data for state and local areas. <http://wonder.cdc.gov>
- *The Kaiser Family Foundation's "State Health Facts"* is an online resource for health and health care data for each state. It covers statistics like the number of uninsured residents to the cost of Medicaid spending. See <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/>
- *Faith-based/community organizations* of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and many other diverse faiths are often active in communities and have done background assessments. For example, the Salvation Army ([www.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org)) is active in many areas. BAPS Charities ([www.bapscharities.org](http://www.bapscharities.org)) is a Hindu 501(c)(3)-registered nonprofit public charity active in health initiatives, disaster relief and other humanitarian efforts. There are many other racial/ethnically and religiously diverse groups that are active in serving their communities.
- Spokane, Washington has organized all it's health and health care indicators on one website: [www.communityindicators.ewu.edu](http://www.communityindicators.ewu.edu)

**Source :** [http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1022.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1022.htm)

Talking about the problems and assessing needs can have its' own impact. It can expose problems that people hadn't been talking about yet. And it can help people bond together around a larger purpose. Here's what one participant in a community project said: "You begin to see your interests as broadening in relationships with other people, particularly as you begin to have serious conversations and you begin to identify with other people's experiences."

**Source:** [www.kettering.org/stream\\_document.aspx?rID=1146&catID=25&itemID=1144&typeID=8](http://www.kettering.org/stream_document.aspx?rID=1146&catID=25&itemID=1144&typeID=8)

## Step Two: Agree How It Ought to Be

Before you start thinking about how to solve the world's problems, you need to think about what you want the world to look like. A vision that binds your group together is the real power that will sustain your effort.

Creating a vision can have a big impact all by itself. Why not ask everyone to think positively about change in the community? It can create a new way for people to get involved.

### The Visioning Process

Thinking big doesn't always come easy. Here are some questions to get people thinking:

#### Community Vision

- What is your health care dream for our community?
- What should change?
- What kind of community (or school, neighborhood, etc.) do we want to create?
- What health care issues or problems do we share?
- Why should we address these issues?
- What are our major strengths and assets?
- What are our weaknesses?
- What should our purpose be?
- What would success look like?

The following case study provides an example of how a group in Richland County, South Carolina came together to help parents advocate for their children with asthma.

#### Case Study Example III: Agree How It Ought To Be

##### **Project Breathe Easy, Richland County, South Carolina**

Family Connection of South Carolina, Inc. initiated Project Breathe Easy (PBE) in 1997 in Richland County. The project provides parents of asthmatic children with parent-to-parent support and empowers them to advocate on behalf of their children. PBE targets, but is not limited to, lower-socioeconomic communities.

Organizers attribute Project Breathe Easy's early success, in part, to its clearly defined goals established by a project advisory committee. The committee, comprised of a broad group of parents, asthma professionals, state government officials, social services agencies, South Carolina American Lung Association representatives, developed specific program curriculum and participation requirements. All parents must complete extensive initial and annual training and have home visits and monthly telephone contact.

By thinking through programming goals from the outset, project organizers established a successful and replicable program.

## Step Three: Make a Plan

After thinking big, you need to start small. Small doesn't mean accomplishing little or nothing. It means focusing on the details. As baseball legend and folk philosopher Yogi Berra once said: *"If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there."*

You need to identify specific goals. They should include what you want to accomplish and when. These goals can focus on changing behavior like smoking by youth. They may be about changing something in the community like access to primary health care. Or the goals might try to create a better way to do something like coordinating health care and social services for people with a disability. Objectives will likely be a combination of different kinds of activities.

### Identify Objectives

While objectives will focus on different kinds of results, they all share the same characteristics. They should be S.M.A.R.T. + C as the University of Kansas Community Toolbox recommends:

#### S.M.A.R.T. + C

- **Specific.** That is, they tell how much (e.g., 40 %) of what is to be achieved (e.g., what behavior of whom or what outcome) by when (e.g., by 2010).
- **Measurable.** Information concerning the objective can be collected, detected, or obtained from records (at least potentially).
- **Achievable.** Not only are the objectives themselves possible, it is likely that your organization will be able to pull them off.
- **Relevant** to the mission. Your organization has a clear understanding of how these objectives fit in with the overall vision and mission of the group.
- **Timed.** Your organization has developed a timeline (a portion of which is made clear in the objectives) by which they will be achieved.
- **Challenging.** They stretch the group to set its aims on significant improvements that are important to members of the community.

### Create a Strategy

Once you have your objectives, you need to figure out how to accomplish them. You need a strategy. Strategies explain how the initiative will achieve its objectives. Generally, organizations will have a wide variety of strategies that include people from all of the different parts of the community. These strategies range from very broad efforts that involve different parts of and groups in the community to very specific strategies that take place on a much smaller scale.

Examples of broad strategies include:

- A child health program might use social marketing to promote adult involvement with children.

- An adolescent pregnancy initiative might decide to increase access to contraceptives in the community.
- An urban revitalization project might enhance the “healthiness” of the community by building walking trails and other infrastructure encouraging physical activity.

Five types of specific strategies can help guide most interventions.

- Providing information and enhancing skills (e.g., offer skills training in conflict management.)
- Enhancing services and support (e.g., start a mentoring program for high-risk youth.)
- Modifying access, barriers, and opportunities (e.g., offer scholarships to students who would be otherwise unable to attend college or pursue medical training.)
- Changing the consequences of efforts (e.g., provide incentives for community members to volunteer.)
- Modifying policies (e.g., change business policies to allow parents and guardians and volunteers to spend more time with young children.)

Consider what has been proven to work. Nothing succeeds like success. Look at “best practices” and recognize it is not always necessary to start from scratch. The example below points out the value of simply bringing various existing healthcare delivery organizations together under one roof, and involving the local citizens in developing and assessing services.

The following case study in Jackson, Mississippi provides an example of how building on success can help sustain and grow an initiative.

***Case Study Example IV: Building on Success:***

***The Jackson Medical Mall, Jackson, Mississippi***

In 1995, Jackson physician Aaron Shirley, MD, conceived of turning a vacant and dilapidated shopping mall into a comprehensive, multidisciplinary health care complex serving the low-income residents of Jackson.

Dr. Shirley and his friend Reuben V. Anderson, an attorney and former Mississippi Supreme Court justice presented the idea to Dr. Wallace Conerly, vice-chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMC). The Medical Center’s teaching clinics while successful had outgrown their space on the Medical Center campus; however the Center could not afford to build a new, freestanding ambulatory care center. When presented with the idea, the Medical Center moved quickly to help create the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation, which purchased the mall in 1995 for \$2.7 million with loans from three prominent banking institutions. Capitalizing on the support of the Medical Center, organizers expanded their coalition to include other health partners such as Tougaloo College and Jackson State University.

Building on the success of established health providers, Dr. Shirley’s vision has become what is now the Jackson Medical Mall – a one-stop, comprehensive health care facility that also offers human services and economic development.

## Step Four: Organize

The first step in organizing your effort is to understand the need for leadership. Organize, Organize, Organize “I decided to put myself in charge” reads a t-shirt popular with parents shopping for children’s clothing. Community leaders take responsibility for the well-being and improvement of their communities.

### How to Be a Good Leader

If you are a community leader or want to become one, you’re qualified if you answer yes to the following questions:

- Do you want to improve your community?
- Do you believe you have something to contribute?
- Do you not wait around for someone else to get the job done?

Don’t wait for someone to appoint you as a community leader. Even people who run for office first make a decision that they want to be a leader. You can probably take as much responsibility for your community as you are willing.

Here are some of the values you want to nurture as you develop your leadership abilities:

- **Integrity:** To trust you, people have to know that you say what you believe and act accordingly. If people trust you, they may follow you to the ends of the earth.
- **Courage:** It's okay to shake in your boots, but someone has to go slay that dragon, and it might as well be you. Leadership means that you show others the way through the dark, scary, forest. Go ahead and speak the truth--even when it's not popular.
- **Commitment:** You have to stick with a task through the good times and the bad. Your commitment will serve as a model.
- **Ability to care about others:** People will follow you if they know you care about them and about others. The greater your ability to care about all types of people, the more confidence they will have in you.
- **Creativity and flexibility:** Every situation will call for a different response. Be ready to change and come up with new solutions

The following case study provides an example of how finding common ground among diverse groups – even when the motivations are different – can result in a successful program.

## Case Study Example V: Organize

### ***The Asheville Project, Asheville, North Carolina***

The Asheville Project, established in 1997, utilizes community pharmacists trained in diabetic education to help diabetic patients adhere to a diabetes control health regimen.

Under the program, the city of Asheville, N.C., offered employees and their family members with diabetes regular consultations – at no cost – with a community-based pharmacist specially trained in diabetic education. During consultations, patients received treatment monitoring, advice on diet, exercise, stress reduction and medications, and home glucose meter training. When necessary, pharmacists referred patients to a physician or to a diabetes education center.

As an incentive for patients to participate, participants received a free home blood glucose monitor and a waiver of co-payments for all diabetes-specific drugs and supplies. To encourage pharmacist participation, program organizers provided pharmacists with training in diabetes management, monetary reimbursement for the additional patient care responsibilities and recognition of their expertise and contribution to patient healthcare.

By obtaining buy-in from the two major stakeholders vital to the program's success, the City of Asheville succeeded in lowering their health care costs and providing individuals with diabetes more personalized care, education and disease management. The program has been recognized as an innovation in health care provision.

## Community Organizing

Leaders of community collaboratives first need to set a direction. Then the process of organizing activities can begin. Below is a checklist for doing basic organizing:

### **Checklist for Organizing**

- **Gain an understanding of the community** -- What is the community like, and what is important to its residents.
- **Generate and use power** -- There are many types of power; depending on the nature of your organization and your long-term goals, your organization may have or need different types. There is political or legislative power, consumer power, regulatory power, and protest power.
- **Articulate issues** -- A crucial part of effective organizing is being very clear about what people find important, and what you feel should be done about it.
- **Plan purposeful action** – decisiveness is key to effective community organization.
- **Involve other people** -- Simply put, community organizing works in large part because of the strength that exists in numbers. The idea that "what we can't do alone, we can often accomplish together" is what community organization is all about.
- **Generate and use other resources** -- While involving many people is at the heart of any community organizing effort, a group will need to obtain other resources as well. These may include cash, gifts in kind, and other forms of donations or support.
- **Communicate with your community** -- There are many ways to effectively get the word out and let the community at large in on what you are doing and about why you are doing it, and why they should be a part of it.

**Source:** [http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1053.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1053.htm)

## Work with Community Leaders

Next, you need to work with other leaders and organizations in the community. Consider writing a memo of collaboration to involve others in the community. This memo would show everyone's roles in tackling the problem and achieving the goals. It would involve walking other organizations through the same kind of leadership steps that you do for your own organization. Specifically, this involves working together on a mission statement, objectives, an action plan, and measuring progress. Since health disparities are such serious problems when it comes to access to quality healthcare, it is a good idea to involve underserved community leaders. Then you need to determine how to share resources and responsibilities for achieving results. Here is an example of a high degree of collaboration in North Carolina.

### Step Five: Get Going

Now you are ready to go to work. You have determined the problems you want to solve and agree on their importance. You have created a vision, outlined strategies and are ready to make a plan, organize and execute it. Now you need to consider the importance of measuring your results.

How will you know if you are achieving your goals? You need to be able to see your progress and show everyone else. Sometimes you might even receive the honor of an award. That's what Premier, Inc., a national coalition of non-profit hospitals, tries to do for notable efforts throughout the country. The following example of a group in Allegany County, Maryland providing health care to low-income, uninsured adults illustrates how successful programs have clear, achievable goals.

#### *Case Study Example VI: Achieving Results*

##### ***Allegany Community Access Program, Allegany County, Maryland***

The Allegany Community Access Program (Allegany CAP) provides improved access to quality health care services for low-income, uninsured adults by coordinating services and decreasing service duplication. Program organizers developed a virtual network and universal intake form to determine eligibility, streamline enrollment, provide referrals, and track utilization.

Over the years, the Program has achieved its goals and demonstrated proven results. Since its inception in September 2001, program operators have provided over 5,000 services to uninsured and low-income individuals in the county.

*Allegany CAP* continues to identify unique and collaborative solutions addressing the needs of the economically depressed region in western Maryland, including development of a community healthcare plan for the working uninsured.

There's an old management saying: "You cannot improve what you cannot measure." Measuring results means that you can see actual differences in the health and well being of a group of individuals. Here's how one major institution tracked its results:

## Case Study Example VII: Measuring Results

### [New Mexico Health Education Collaborative, Albuquerque, New Mexico](#)

The New Mexico Health Education Collaborative is the result of diverse organizations in the cities of Albuquerque and Taos, New Mexico coming together to improve health care delivery for chronically ill patients.

The Collaborative established a centralized electronic warehouse of health information for patients with four chronic conditions – diabetes, pediatric asthma, depression and low back pain who were covered by major New Mexico health plans or treated in Albuquerque and Taos hospitals and health systems. By including a patient’s medical history in a database, clinicians could access the medical histories at the point-of-care – allowing clinicians to provide more effective and efficient care.

As a major part of this initiative, organizers tracked the use of the database and patient outcomes. An analysis of this data (and comparison to non-program patient data) concluded that database participants benefited significantly from clinicians having access to their medical history.

## Develop a Business Plan

You will need to consider how your effort will be financially sustainable. Consider drafting a business plan and forming a financial sustainability committee. You can find templates for writing business plans at United States Small Business Administration ([www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/plan/writeabusinessplan/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/plan/writeabusinessplan/index.html)). Not all business plan elements will apply to your objectives in improving the health of a community, as this often involves a heavy dose of social responsibility.

### **Business Plan Checklist**

1. Describe the venture (new or current organization, product or service), often including its primary features, advantages and benefits
2. What the organization wants to do with it (buy it, expand it, etc.)
3. Justification that the plans are credible (e.g., results of research that indicate the need for what the organization wants to do)
4. Marketing plans, including research results about how the venture will be marketed (e.g., who the customers will be, any specific groups (or targets) of customers, why they need the venture (benefits they seek from the venture), how they will use the venture, what they will be willing to pay, how the venture will be advertised and promoted, etc.)
5. Staffing plans, including what expertise will be needed to build (sometimes included in business plans) and provide the venture on an ongoing basis
6. Management plans, including how the expertise will be organized, coordinated and led
7. Financial plans, including costs to build the venture (sometimes included in business plans), costs to operate the venture, expected revenue, budgets for each of the first several years, identify when the venture might break-even (begin making more money overall than it has cost), etc.
8. Appendices (there are a wide variety of materials included in appendices, e.g., description of the overall organization, its other products and/or services, its current staff, etc.)

**Source:** [http://www.mangementhelp.org/plan\\_dec/bus\\_plan/bus\\_plan.htm](http://www.mangementhelp.org/plan_dec/bus_plan/bus_plan.htm)



A financial sustainability committee is a group that helps you to raise money or to obtain goods for your project. Generally, such a group is made up of people in your community that have, or can get, money or goods. People who have experience dealing with legal or financial issues, such as lawyers and accountants, may also be members. That's because they can help you with the many legal issues that can affect you financially, such as becoming tax exempt. They can help ease the transition from one source of funding to another, such as at the end of a grant period. They can help find money or goods from many different sources. A financial committee that has members with many connections will help lead to a diverse funding base for your organization, which is one of the most effective ways to ensure sustainability. Sometimes, the existence of a committee for financial sustainability is a requirement for receiving a grant. Too often, members of organization spend so much time trying to find resources for the organization they are unable to spend time doing what they were hired to do. Ideally, the committee should be formed during the first year of your project.

## Behind the Scenes of a Successful Meeting

Throughout this entire process and especially at the beginning, running the meetings will require much effort on your part, or the engagement of an outside facilitator. A diverse group of people all with their own time constraints can be a challenge to coordinate. Sometimes it will indeed feel as if you are trying to herd kittens. Figure 4 gives you some practical advice about running a meeting.

Communities that do more of this kind of change, get better at it. They increase their capacity to change because practice does indeed make perfect. But the process is not always linear. You can have a clear vision and objectives at the start only to find out there are large obstacles that cause you to rethink your expectations for success. With practice, you also need patience to be successful over the long term.

### 1. Set the Stage

- Find a respected host or outside moderator to ensure everyone feels welcome
- Choose a neutral location so no one has the home court advantage
- Identify a meeting goal that has broad appeal, but be specific to show you'll make good use of everyone's time.

### 2. Help People Talk to Each Other

- Invite a diverse group to avoid preaching to the choir.
- Involve other leaders who can help you get a good mix of personalities and deal with any bad blood
- Don't be surprised if new ideas pop-up because group discussions get people thinking in fresh ways

## Conclusion

Communities that do more of this kind of change, get better at it. They increase their capacity to change because practice does indeed make perfect. But the process is not always linear. You can have a clear vision and objectives at the start only to find out there are large obstacles that cause you to rethink your expectations for success. With practice, you also need patience to be successful over the long term.

## Assets on Your Side

The third section, “**Assets on Your Side**,” connects you with people and resources that can help you every step along the way. There’s no way to avoid getting stuck. You will need help getting back on track.

The good feelings generated by community work also inspire people who want to help you. In fact, many of the organizations and resources that are available to you have grown out of community efforts. They know where you are coming from, and have formed their own specialized communities to help you.

Below are potential resources for help in three key areas: expertise, funding, and marketing. Not every resource will be appropriate for you, but the descriptions will help you determine if they might be. Good luck!

### Expertise

**Ask an Advisor.** The University of Kansas invites online inquiries as part of its Community Tool Box. You can submit questions online about practical problems that you might encounter as you work on promoting health in your community. Questions can be about topics like planning, assessment, participation, leadership, publicity, advocacy, evaluation, and organizational relationships. You’ll get an answer if the question might also benefit many other toolbox users. Click on the Ask an Advisor@ tab at <http://ctb.ku.edu>.

**American Project Access Network.** This organization serves a growing number of communities that are working to give uninsured residents access to health care. It grew out of a successful effort called Project Access led by physicians in Asheville, North Carolina, which has achieved near-universal access in the surrounding area, Buncombe County. Since 2002, members of the organization have traveled all over the country to help communities learn about their success and to get started themselves. More than 20 communities have already put in place Project Access-type systems, and the organization is working in over 100 more communities which are getting started. The phone number is 828-274-2267 and website is <http://www.apanonline.org/>

**National Healthy Start Association.** A federal program, Healthy Start has challenged communities across the nation to reduce infant deaths and low birth weight. The Healthy Start Association serves those communities that participate in this effort. They provide a nationwide communications and technical assistance network for the exchange and dissemination of models that work. The phone number is 410-525-1600 and the website is <http://www.healthystartassoc.org/>

**Healthy Communities References.** The Regional Plan Association in New York City, which dates back to 1922, has compiled a long list of resources that focus on health and the physical environment. For example, it lists resources about designing communities to promote physical activity. See <http://www.rpa.org/projects/regionaldesign/hcreferences.html>

**AHEC/Community Partners, Inc.** Is a good source of information on ‘How To’ community partnerships. From the Ground Up A workbook on Coalition Building & Community Development is available as a reference guide. See [www.ahecpartners.org](http://www.ahecpartners.org) for more information.

Consider talking to **your local public or private university or Agricultural Extension services in rural areas**. Many are very interested in supporting community collaboratives.

**WRGH/FAHCL. (Wye River Group on Healthcare/Foundation for American Health Care Leadership)** The experience of WRGH principals with expertise in law, public policy, medicine, public health, actuarial issues, legislative and regulatory compliance, health insurance, public affairs, health policy analysis, and health benefits coupled with a keen understanding of the complex interdependencies among competing interests uniquely qualifies these experts to facilitate and champion change. For over six years the group has applied its skills to benefit both public and private institutions. A fundamental tenet of WRGH philosophy is that collaborative efforts that help “all boats to rise with the tide” are the most effective approach to addressing the myriad challenges that plague healthcare today. The group uses a methodical process for defining and promoting shared agendas. Because the business of healthcare is complex and interdependent, there is high value in identifying, understanding, and leveraging complementary interests. Contact WRGH/FAHCL [[www.wrgh.org](http://www.wrgh.org)] for assistance.

## Funding

**Applying for a Grant:** How do you apply for grants? Do you really want to apply for a grant? Why should you apply for a grant? The Community Tool Box has answers to these questions and more at: [http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1300.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1300.htm)

The **Foundation Center** maintains a comprehensive database on U.S. grant-makers and their grants. It offers instructions on funding research, help with proposal writing, tools for locating prospective funders, news and research on the field, or a library or training class near you. Its online directory allows grant-seekers to quickly research prospective funders by providing access to detailed information on grant-makers, grants, and grant recipients, as well as access to grant-maker web sites and searchable IRS non-profit reporting forms. Subscriptions begin at \$19.95 a month. The phone number is 212-620-4230 and the website is <http://foundationcenter.org/>.

**Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.** As the nation’s largest health care philanthropy, RWJ is involved in almost every aspect of health and health care from childhood obesity to health care quality. Most of its funding goes to areas that the foundation specifies in advance, but it also accepts grant requests for innovative ideas any time. You can learn about both types of grants at: <http://www.rwjf.org/applications/> or by calling (888) 631-9989.

The **W.K. Kellogg Foundation** is another giant in the philanthropic world. It has supported community work across the globe since 1930. Its’ grant-making in the health arena focuses on individual and community health and health care access and quality. Its current goal is to promote health among vulnerable individuals and communities through programming that empowers individuals, mobilizes communities, engages institutions, improves health care quality and access, and informs public and marketplace policy. Kellogg’s grant-making takes into account the social and economic determinants of health within a person’s community, the quality of health institutions within that community, and the policies that determine how health services are organized, provided, and financed.

**Grants.gov.** The federal government is the source of more than \$400 billion in grants. Much of that goes to health-related projects from agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and the Federal Drug Administration. The website

also provides basic information about who can qualify for grants. You can also sign up for email alerts for grant announcements. Go to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives' Weekly Digest for Faith-Based and Community Organizations.** To join this mailing list, visit [www.hhs.gov/fbcj](http://www.hhs.gov/fbcj), click "Join our Mailing List," at the bottom on the page, click "Join or leave the list, or update options," enter the requested information, and click "Join the list." You will then receive a weekly digest of all grant opportunities at CDC and HHS for which faith-based/community organizations are eligible to apply. Go to [www.fbcj.gov](http://www.fbcj.gov).

**White House Conferences on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.** These conferences are geared towards faith-based and community organizations that have no history of applying for government grants, as well as those that have applied, but have not yet been successful. The conferences provide participants with a general overview of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, information about the government grants process and available funding opportunities, and an overview of the legal responsibilities that come with the receipt of Federal funds. The events also offer grant writing tutorials for select Federal grant programs. The conferences are free, but pre-registration is required. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis. You can go to [www.fbcj.gov](http://www.fbcj.gov) to register online.

## Marketing

**Social Marketing Institute.** Social marketing takes the sophisticated techniques developed for commercial purposes and applies them to public causes. The goal of the institute is to advance the understanding and use of social marketing to influence an individual's behavior to improve their well being and that of society. Its services are geared to established institutions, but its website has several useful articles and basic ideas. See <http://www.socialmarketing.org/papers.html>

**Implement a Social Marketing Effort** . The Community Tool Box outlines the steps for conducting a social marketing campaign and provides links to additional sources of information. It also gives some examples about how social marketing has been used to promote child health and child rearing. See <http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/implementsocialmarketing/index.jsp>

**Idea Virus** . In the Information Age ideas can spread all by themselves as people pass them on directly to each other. Author, speaker, entrepreneur Seth Godin has devised a recipe for spreading information with minimal investment. This approach has not been tested much in the field of community organization, but it promises an innovative, creative way to getting the word out about your efforts. For more information, see [www.ideavirus.com](http://www.ideavirus.com).