



Community Partnerships Module 4.1 Transcript

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Welcome to the first Module of the Community Partnerships Development Cycle Step. This step helps identify opportunities for your organization to successfully partner with your community to ensure your wellness initiative is effective, comprehensive, and sustainable.

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Now that you've successfully completed Buy In, Assessment, and Planning, we invite you to think about how your organization might partner with resources and organizations in your community.

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The goal of this module is to recognize the importance of collaboration between employers and the community, and how this links to your efforts in Buy In, Assessment, and Planning. By the end of this module, you will be able to articulate the concept of a healthy community and recognize the importance of Partnering Together for a Healthy Workforce, understand how employers can benefit from community partnerships, Learn ways organizations and communities can support each other.

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Let's begin to explore some reasons why your organization should reach out to partners in your community.

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What is a healthy community?

Healthy communities:

Have open spaces for people to gather. Having a strong social network contributes to good mental health.

Provide access to healthy and affordable food choices like community gardens, farmers markets, and healthy foods in grocery stores

Have options to be physically active with connected sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, trails, and open spaces for all residents to be active, regardless of age, abilities, or income.

Are clean environments. Air and noise pollution from highways can impact residents. Additionally, a healthy community has a clean water supply, proper sewage facilities and soil free of toxins.

Allow you to feel safe. In a healthy community, streets are well lit, crosswalks and bike lanes well-marked, and residential street traffic speeds maintained at a safe level.

Access to affordable public transportation. This and connected biking and walking paths are helpful to encourage less driving and provide choices in modes of transportation where possible. In some industries like retail and hospitality, healthy walkable communities are also good for business -- especially if the business relies on people coming and going from the building.

Keep in mind that health starts where you live, work, and play.

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Why should your organization learn about and be connected to your community and not just your employees? For starters, healthy communities benefit everyone. Wouldn't you want to live in the community that was described on the previous slide? As you know, Working on Wellness stresses *Partnering for a Healthy Workforce*. We believe that strong worksite wellness initiatives are built over time and through partnerships. Through your planning in Working on Wellness, you will likely make modifications to the work environment that enable your employees to be healthy at work. However, there are factors outside of the work environment that contribute to health, like access to green space and healthy foods when people leave work for lunch or head home to family after work. By understanding the connections between our environments and health, you'll be able to build a more effective and sustainable wellness initiative. Let's explore some of these factors on the following slides.

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This chart from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, shows the factors that influence health. You may think that health depends solely on individual behaviors like smoking or not exercising. In reality, individual behaviors only account for 30% of what influences health. This means that 70% of factors that influence health are independent of health behaviors. So while your organization may strive to enable employees to make healthier behavior choices, there are many other things you can do to improve their health. While you may not be able to directly influence social, economic and physical environment conditions in your community, understanding how these factors influence your employees' health is critical.

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Does this photo look familiar? You first saw it in the Assessment modules. Does this photo look alarming? Imagine this is the road where your organization is located. Here you see employees that want to engage in healthy behaviors like walking, but are unable to because of the busy highway. Think about a time when you struggled to find the motivation to exercise. Wouldn't it be easier to motivate yourself if you had access to an inviting walking path to use with a group of colleagues? In many Massachusetts communities, there are efforts underway to make communities more walkable. Cities and towns across the state need to hear from local businesses that they value communities that promote health.

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Now let's explore how to define your organization's community.

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To engage your community, you'll first need to think about what your community includes. There are likely many ways you could define community including, but not limited to, your

worksite's geographic area. Your community might also include the places where people live or spend time. It can also include communities not defined in geographical terms, perhaps based on whom your worksite employs or serves.

The important thing is ... You will want to get to know whatever community is most relevant to your worksite or worksites.

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Once you have defined your community, you will want to get to know your community. This includes considerations such as its geographical boundaries, physical aspects and infrastructure, history, demographics, leadership and culture, resources, and needs.

In the second module of this cycle step, you will conduct a scan of your community to identify potential resources and partnerships to help you build a sustainable wellness initiative for your organization.

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Now that you've begun to think about how to define your community, let's explore what a community partnership looks like.

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A community partnership is when public, community, and business leaders work together to use resources to improve health and well-being for the workforce, families, and community.

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In an ideal partnership, all parties benefit. There are ways that your organization will benefit by partnering with your community, and there are ways that your community will benefit.

Let's look at an example of an effective community partnership in Massachusetts. Harbor Health Services, Inc. (HHS) is a community health agency and a member of the first Working on Wellness cohort. In the Assessment phase of the program, HHS administered a Needs and Interest Survey and the Wellness Committee learned that:

- 4 out of 5 HHSI employees do not consume the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables
- Almost half of HHSI employees want a farmer's market at their worksite

The Wellness Committee prioritized healthy eating for their wellness initiative. HHSI partnered with The Fresh Truck to bring the mobile fruit and vegetable market to three HHSI locations every week. Employees received coupons for \$5 off a \$10 purchase to promote participation. In the first month of the initiative they had 390 visits to The Fresh Truck from their employees. HHS Wellness Co-Champions shared the Fresh Truck program with nearby businesses and residents. There are three public housing developments within a half-mile of the HHSI Fresh Truck locations. They actively promoted the Fresh Truck with one public housing development and were planning to build relationships with the other two. Not only did employees benefit, but the community did too!

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Now we'll discuss the benefits of partnering with your community to create a comprehensive worksite wellness initiative.

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There are numerous benefits of partnering with your community, including:

- Improving the health of your prospective employees. By creating a healthier and more prosperous community, you are investing in your future workforce.
- People have more disposable income. A healthier community leads to a more prosperous community. A healthier community spends less on health care costs and has more to invest and purchase from businesses in the community.
- As you implement your wellness initiative, take stock in what wellness services and resources exist in your local community. Collaborate with existing organizations and save money by using free or low-cost health resources in your community.

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Let's explore some ways that your community can support your organization as you continue on your path to worksite wellness:

- Designing / supporting open spaces for activities
- Providing land for gardens
- Opening up farmers markets
- Providing well-maintained sidewalks
- Maintaining well-marked crosswalks and bike lanes
- In your community there are resources specific to wellness, such as local farms, gyms, and individual wellness specialists. The next module will provide you with a tool to think through some key community partners to build up your wellness initiative.

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As you plan and implement your organization's interventions to improve health, think about your community at large.

- Can your employees benefit from hosting a local farmers market? Why not invite others in the community to take part once you have local farmers signed on?
- How can you utilize shared space to benefit your community? Does your organization have space that would benefit youth or other community programs?
- Can your organization benefit by using other space, like schools, gym, or public use areas?
- Is your organization considering health screenings for your employees? Some organizations open their screenings to the community.
- How can your employees donate their time, expertise and resources to your community?

Start to become aware of and think of the needs in your community.

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In this module you learned the importance of Partnering Together for a Healthy Workforce, how to define your community and a community partnership, and ways organizations can support community health and ways communities can support organizational wellness.

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Congratulations! This concludes Module 1, the first module in Community Partnerships. From the resources tab, download the Key Takeaways and Action Item Checklist document. To continue to the next module, click “Mark Complete” below.