

STEP 5 - MAKING DECISIONS

STEP 5: MAKING DECISIONS - WHERE TO FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS?

Now that you have completed the analysis of the community assessment checklist, community data and any community survey or other assessment information (Step 3) and looked at the array of strategies to be considered (Step 4), it's now time to narrow your focus. This can be a very simple process or can be done in a very structured manner – it's up to you.

Listed in the strategies section (Step Four) were a number of policy or environmental changes that you could make. You should use the planning tools in this section to determine which changes you want to make first. Think about addressing some of the easy changes first to get a taste of success and show that your efforts are working. As your ACEs initiative further develops, you can always tackle some of the more difficult issues.

Impact of Environmental and Policy Changes

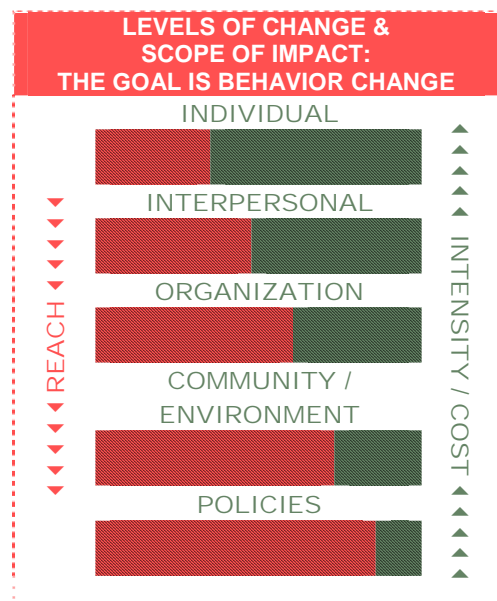
Unlike trying to impact change at an individual level, environmental and policy changes have the ability to impact large groups of people and will likely provide the most “bang for the buck.” The diagram illustrates why changes in the environment or changes in policy are so important.

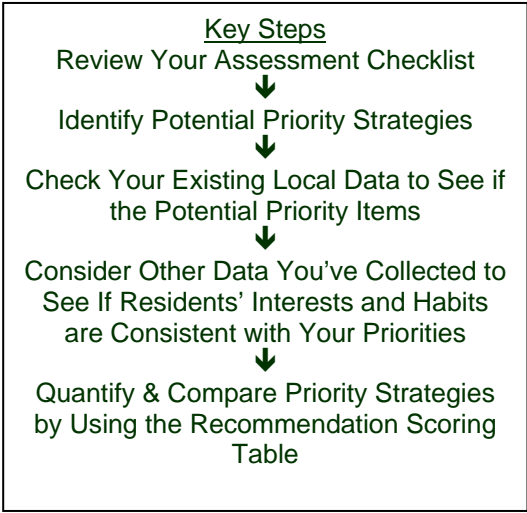
What the diagram to the right illustrates is that initiatives that target individual behavior change take a great deal of resources and impact only one person at a time. Policy and higher level initiatives targeting communities and organizations have a much greater potential impact. Although your strategies should address as many levels as possible, it's also important to focus on areas where the greatest potential benefit could occur.

Where to Start

Start with the ACEs Assessment Checklist (Appendix B) that you completed in Step 3. Do a “first cut” by looking at the strategies that you scored and determine ones that are potential priorities to improve or implement as new strategies. Now take what other information you've learned from the existing community data to see if there are some logical areas to focus on because of existing progress or available resources. Finally, if you have additional formative assessment information from surveys or interviews, use those sources as additional background in making your decisions.

At this point you might be able to decide where to focus your efforts. However, an additional step can help you decide where you'll get the most “bang for the buck”. By considering factors such as importance, cost, time, effort and reach or number of residents likely to be affected by any changes, you can place a defined point value on each strategy and compare the relative value of implementing each strategy. This may be helpful in coming up with a manageable number of strategies. To summarize, the key steps at this point are listed in the box on the next page. An explanation of this recommendation scoring table is found later in this section and a blank form can be found in Appendix D.





Developing Your ACEs Initiative Plan

One way to develop your ACEs plan is to take your Active Community Environment Assessment checklist and evaluate the areas where no policy or program exists or areas where some policy or program exists, but can be improved. For each of these items, ask the following questions:

- ❖ How important is the item?
- ❖ How much will it cost to implement the item?
- ❖ How much time and effort would be needed to implement the item?
- ❖ How great is the potential “reach” or how many people may be affected.
- ❖ How well does the item match community interests and other relevant data? Use the survey results to help answer this question.

You should also “package” your activities whenever possible so that they build off of each other, rather than pick a set of unrelated activities that are not connected. By providing the right mix of strategies, you can get a multiplier effect that is greater than the effect of adding up individual activities. “Packaging” related strategies will lead to greater participation and long term success. For instance, having a policy that encourages Safe Routes to School coupled with buy-in and enforcement of the speed limit by police in school zones will lead to greater success.

NARROWING THE SCOPE

RECOMMENDATIONS – NARROWING THE SCOPE

By looking at your current inventory of strategies, you should be able to see the gaps in areas where there are additional strategies that could be implemented. By identifying those gaps and comparing them with the identified community needs, you should be able to match high priority gaps with high priority needs. Finally, by answering questions about the importance, cost, time, effort and potential number of people that will be reached by your program strategies, you will be ready to select what will be included in your wellness initiative. A model to walk you through this process is included later in this chapter in the form of a Recommendation Table.

You can use the Recommendation Table below to help narrow the scope of your ACEs initiative. Once you’ve identified possible areas to focus on, asking the questions about importance, cost, time, effort and reach should get you to a very specific set of activities to implement.

RECOMMENDATION TABLE - SAMPLE

Instructions: Rate each of the recommendations identified in the ACEs Assessment Checklist on the following aspects: importance, cost, time and commitment. Rate each on a scale of 1-5 (low-high) using the chart below. Higher scores should indicate priority items to implement.

Importance	How important is the recommendation? 1 = Not at all important 3 = Somewhat important 5 = Very important						
Cost	How expensive would it be to plan and implement the recommendation? 1 = Very expensive 3 = Moderately expensive 5 = Not expensive						
Time	How much time and effort would be needed to implement the recommendation? 1 = Extensive time & effort 3 = Moderate time & effort 5 = Low time & effort						
Commitment	How enthusiastic would people be about implementing the recommendation? 1 = Not enthusiastic 3 = Moderately enthusiastic 5 = Very enthusiastic						
Reach	How many people will likely be affected by this recommendation? 1 = Very few people 3 = Some people 5 = Most or all people						
Item #	Recommendations	Importance	Cost	Time	Commitment	Reach	Points / Ranking
A3.1	Adopt an official plan for improving non-motorized transportation, including a timetable and a budget or a multimodal transportation plan	5	4	4	5	5	23
B2.4	Require new residential areas to have sidewalks.	4	2	3	4	4	17
C1.1	Complete an inventory of physical activity facilities and/or opportunities in the community and make it available to the public.	4	4	4	4	4	20
D1.8	Create a public transportation bus system for regular commuting that is both frequent enough and serves many destinations?	4	1	2	4	4	15
E2.7	Work with law enforcement on enforcing traffic regulations requiring cars to yield to pedestrians at crosswalks.	3	4	4	4	4	19
F1.3	Place an ACEs advocate on a municipal board or committees dealing with land use and transportation decisions?	5	5	4	5	5	24

(A blank Recommendation Table can be found in Appendix D)

What can you do with this information? – Some examples.

If you have limited resources and can't implement all of your community's recommendations, you should look at total score and category scores to help select priorities. The policy items (A3.1 & F1.3) have low cost and great reach so they might be the items to implement first. On the other end of the spectrum, a bus system (D1.8) might be problematic because of the ridership volume needed to support the cost and time necessary to develop a system for a smaller community.

Be realistic!

Limit your initial set of activities so you can focus your efforts and have some early successes. You can always expand your initiative as it matures, but a realistic set of objectives to begin with will require fewer resources and will keep you from being overwhelmed.

PLANNING WORKSHEET

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Once you've decided on your priorities, you should develop a specific plan to implement the programming you've selected. The plan would include:

- ❖ The overall goals and objectives of your ACEs initiative.
- ❖ Specific recommendations on strategies to implement. These need to be clearly stated and measurable or your evaluation won't be meaningful;
- ❖ The chosen activities;
- ❖ The staff, resources and materials needed to make it happen;
- ❖ The time frame for completion;
- ❖ The evaluation plan to measure results.

The plan can also be used as part of a presentation to give to interested groups, potential funders or local government to sell them on your ACEs initiative and get buy-in for the specific strategies and activities you plan to implement. A sample planning worksheet is shown below.

PLANNING WORKSHEET - SAMPLE				
Recommendations	Describe the strategies selected from the Recommendation Table			
Activities	List the activities required to meet the recommendation			
Materials, Resources and Personnel	List the individuals who will do the work; and the resources and tools they need to get the job done.			
Time Frame	When will implementation begin? How long will it take to finish?			
Evaluation	How will you measure your successes and/or misfortunes?			
Recommendations: Strategies to Implement	Activities	Materials, Resources & Personnel	Time Frame	Evaluation Method
Develop a Local Complete Streets Policy	- Meet with local planners - Convince council member to introduce the policy	Draft policy language (Jim Jones)	6 months May- November	Policy in place
Implement a Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program in 2 schools	- Identify 2 schools - Get Principal buy-in - Find school champion - Complete SR2S planning - Implement kick-off event	Sample (Mary Smith)	6 months Oct - April	- SR2S program in place - Pre/post count of # of kids walking to school
Convert downtown railroad track into a trail	- Research cost & logistics - Pass City Council motion with funding - Build trail	(City Planner & Public Works)	18 months January 2009 – July 2010	- Trail done - # of users

(A blank Planning Worksheet can be found in Appendix E)

The purpose of the planning worksheet is to keep the initiative on track and clearly assign responsibilities. Part of ongoing partner meetings should be a review of the plan items to check their status and make any necessary modifications. The initiative will have a better chance for success by clearly assigning tasks and deadlines for completion.

Step 1 Step 2 Step 3 Step 4 **Step 5** Step 6
Why? ⇒ Starting Up ⇒ Assessing ⇒ Strategies ⇒ **Making Decisions** ⇒ Evaluation