

Dane County: Active Living Workgroup



Communities across Dane County have been creating bike-friendly infrastructure and policies, and several are applying to become Bike Friendly Communities (BFC). The BFC application is extensive, and communities had expressed interest in having local support during the process. To meet this need, the Childhood Obesity Prevention Collaborative of Dane County teamed up with local experts to provide technical assistance for Dane County communities that are applying to be BFC. During meetings of the Collaborative's Active Living workgroup, the members review application-specific topics, such as how to meet the Engineering or Education section requirements, and discuss community progress and achievements. Top experts from various advocacy organizations are invited, with a particular focus on those engaged in innovative work. At least three communities participating in the Active Living meetings will be applying for BFC status in 2015.

First steps

Many members of the Active Living workgroup attended a public health planning and transportation training and reconvened while hosting a regional, Active Community training. A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)



representative suggested that the Collaborative could provide technical assistance for communities applying to become Bike Friendly Communities. The group invited new members to join the workgroup and hosted a kick-off event to build relationships and discuss group goals.

Starting the conversation

The Active Living workgroup focuses each meeting on one of the Five E's on the BFC application: engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation and planning. In addition to providing technical assistance, these meetings build relationships between community organizations and provide a forum for active living discussions. The first meeting featured presentations from local experts on BFC engineering requirements and a discussion of each community's bike-friendly initiatives.

Gaining community support

The Active Living workgroup relied on word-of-mouth and established relationships to expand participation. Applying for BFC status often involves participation from many sectors of the community, including planning, law enforcement, health, and community bicycle coalitions or clubs. After each meeting, the workgroup holds a bike ride in a different community to highlight bike-friendly initiatives and provide an opportunity for participants to build relationships. In addition to holding a kick-off event, the workgroup hosted a presentation by the League of American Bicyclists' BFC Specialist, Steve Clark.

Key players:

- Health department or health coalition members
- Community members interested in implementing an Active Community (AC) strategy
- Experts on the AC strategy implementation (e.g., regional planners, DoT bike/ped coordinators)



Dane County: Technical Assistance Workgroup



This gave participants the chance to ask questions about the application, learn more about bike-friendly communities, and promoted participation in the Active Living workgroup meetings.

Challenges

The biggest challenge the Active Living workgroup has faced is varying meeting attendance. Because BFC applications are often led by community coalitions, some groups have more members able to attend meetings than others.

Information is sent to all members following meetings, including meeting notes and applicable resources.

Key lessons

- Including a bike ride at the end of meetings is a great way to highlight each community's bike-friendly efforts and provide an opportunity for participants to build relationships.
- Several communities participating in Active Living meetings had previously applied for BFC status. Providing a forum for those communities to discuss their experiences was helpful for other communities who are applying for the first time.
- Encourage participants to invite colleagues and community partners, even if they aren't working on the same project. For instance, a planner might not be directly involved in the BFC application, but he or she might be interested in attending the engineering meetings to hear about bike-friendly projects in other communities.

Get started in your community

Do you want to establish a workgroup in your community to provide technical assistance on an Active Community strategy?

Start with these steps, and consult the [Active Community Toolkit](#) and the [Wisconsin Active Communities Alliance website](#) for more resources.

- Recruit community partners to serve on the workgroup. See Key Players on page one for ideas on who should be part of the team.
- Determine if the workgroup will provide one-on-one assistance in addition to hosting meetings or workshops. If the group is providing one-on-one assistance, determine who will be responsible for providing it.
- Invite community coalitions and partners who are working on or interested in working on your workgroup strategy to attend a kick-off meeting.
- Hold a kick-off meeting to give participants a chance to meet each other and discuss their Active Community goals.
- Set an agenda for future meetings and recruit local experts to present.
- Encourage participants to provide feedback on the meetings and suggestions for future topics.

Resources:

[Active Community Toolkit](#)

[Wisconsin Active Communities Alliance website](#)

[League of American Bicyclists](#)

