

Winnebago County: Health in Planning

Many Active Community (AC) strategies involve collaboration between health departments and local or regional planning departments, such as implementing a Complete Streets policy or building new multi-use trails. In Winnebago County, public health professionals from re:THINK, Winnebago's Healthy Living Partnership, established a Health in Planning (HiP) workgroup with local and regional planners to promote collaborations between health and planning. Since its creation in late 2012, the HiP workgroup has developed outreach documents that explain the benefits of integrating health into the planning process, distributed these documents to local decision-makers across the service area, and provided educational outreach to the community. As a result of messaging and outreach from the HiP workgroup, two public health professionals were invited to sit on the advisory committee for the bicycle and pedestrian plan currently being developed for the Fox Cities and Oshkosh urbanized area.

First steps

At a statewide AC conference in December 2012, public health staff and planning staff from Winnebago County started discussing the need to promote health in local and regional planning. They decided to form a HiP workgroup and set out to develop a work plan for improving community health in Winnebago County through the incorporation of health in planning. Each workgroup member selected a few priorities from the [Active Community toolkit](#)



that they felt had the best chance of success or were needs in the county. A few priorities rose to the top when the members merged their selections. The HiP workgroup then developed a work plan and action items based on these strategies.

Starting the conversation

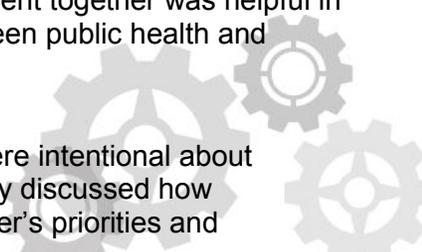
After agreeing on priority strategies and developing a work plan, the HiP workgroup set out to promote health in planning in the community. They developed two one-page documents to distribute to community partners. One [described how important biking and walking routes](#) that connect to destinations are to health, the economy, and the environment. The other highlighted [local examples of projects](#) planned for non-health reasons that had a positive impact on community health. Pairs of workgroup members, one public health professional and one planner, met with local policy makers, health professionals, planners, and workgroups that were interested in promoting community health. Having a planner and a public health professional present together was helpful in demonstrating a unity in messaging and mission between public health and planning organizations.

Gaining community support

During each conversation, the workgroup members were intentional about connecting the dots between health and planning. They discussed how incorporating health in planning was tied to each partner's priorities and

Key players:

- Public health professionals
- City planning staff
- Regional planning staff
- Community development staff



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distributed the one-page documents. By targeting the message to the decision maker's priorities and providing concrete examples of health in planning, the workgroup members demonstrated that the public health department, planning departments, and community partners can have a bigger impact on the community by working together.

Challenges

When the HiP workgroup first began meeting, they discovered that planners and public health professionals use different acronyms and terminology. [A document published by the American Planning Association](#) was useful in identifying common terms used by each group.

Coalition building is a long-term and constantly evolving process. With busy schedules, it can be challenging to sustain interest and motivation. Setting a specific work plan and action items can be helpful in maintaining momentum and keeping the group on track.

Key lessons

- Involve individuals from different aspects of public health and planning and a variety of communities within your area early in the process. This will increase exposure and provide a variety of perspectives.
- Set strategic priorities and an action plan early. Action items are useful tools for measuring progress and success.
- Consider creating short documents that connect the dots between health and planning, with a focus on your priority strategies. The HiP workgroup received feedback that these documents help community partners understand how health and planning work together.

Get started in your community

Do you want to promote collaboration between health and planning by forming a HiP workgroup? Start with these steps, and consult the [Active Community Toolkit](#) and the [Wisconsin Active Communities Alliance website](#) for more resources.

- Recruit local public health professionals and city and regional planning staff to join the workgroup. Remember to include individuals with expertise in different aspects of public health and planning, and recruit individuals from communities throughout your area.
- Review AC strategies and select priority strategies. Develop a work plan for conducting outreach, creating priority documents, and gaining decision-maker and community buy-in.
- Review efforts already underway in the community to identify any plans or projects where health could be incorporated in the planning process.
- Create documents to distribute to community partners, such as health professionals, policy makers, and planners, that highlight the benefits that considering health in planning can provide to the community.
- Conduct in-person meetings with community partners to gain support for incorporating health in planning, with a focus on your priority strategies. Target your message to the partner's priorities, and explicitly connect the dots between health and planning and the partner's priorities.
- Regularly evaluate the workgroup's progress, set new action items, and continue to meet with community partners who are interested in promoting health in planning.

Resources:

[Active Community Toolkit](#)

[Wisconsin Active Communities Alliance website](#)

[Public Health/Planning Terms](#)

