

Healthier Together Clay

Annual Evaluation Report 2019-2020

Executive Summary



Purpose

The primary goal for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) High Obesity Program is to increase access to healthy foods and physical activity in communities with adult obesity rates over 40%. The Healthier Together Clay (HTC) community coalition was formed in 2018. The goals of the HTC coalition are to increase physical activity opportunities and healthy food access within Clay county.

Goal of the Evaluation

The goal of this evaluation was to gain an understanding of the direct and indirect community impacts of the HTC coalition work through phone interviews with HTC coalition members. A review of interview responses and a detailed results section can be found in the full report.

Methods Used

The evaluation team conducted evaluation assessments using an appreciative approach to determine HTC progress in Year 2. One-on-one phone interviews with six HTC coalition members were conducted and analyzed using qualitative content analysis to determine:

- Each member's personal role in the coalition;
- The impact of COVID-19 on HTC coalition efforts;
- Changes in community physical activity, nutrition policy, and healthy food consumption resulting from HTC efforts;
- Community acceptance of HTC initiatives; and
- Future visioning and support for the HTC.

Results

It is important to acknowledge COVID-19 has impacted planned project implementation and evaluation procedures. However, despite the obstacles presented by COVID-19, the HTC coalition and evaluation team continues to make progress consistent with the original proposed timeline.

Four topic areas were addressed specifically in the interview process: food access, physical activity, overall impact, and future impact and visioning. Themes emerged based on interview participant responses within these four overarching topics:



Figure 1: Fort Gains Walk Audit.

Food access covered the development and maintenance of a *Grab-n-Go cooler* to increase community member's ability to purchase healthy food options.

Within **physical activity**, participants described developing a *walking trail* and the creation and posting of *wayfinding signs and a trail guide*.



Figure 2: Fort Gaines walkability signage.

For the **overall impact** of the project, interview participants described how there was *community acceptance* of the coalition's work, created *opportunities for senior citizens*, and *increased access to healthy foods* within the county.

Obstacles included limited community resources, separations within the county's various demographic groups, and not having enough people in the county take advantage of the opportunities provided by HTC.

For **future impact and visioning**, participants expressed a desire to *have greater access to fresh produce, create more opportunities for exercise*, for the community to be *more health conscious*, and to *increase church involvement* in the coalition.

Recommendations

1. Brainstorm alternative methods of increasing healthy food access in Clay county.
 - a. Depending on the resiliency of the partner restaurant, it may be necessary to find another location for the GGC.
 - b. Consider exploring retail options for the distribution of fresh produce in the community, potentially through a farmer's market. The development and sustainability of a farmer's market requires connecting with local farms and a strong organizational structure, as well as specific plans for maintaining supply to the market.
2. Consider formalizing the connection between the pathway near the Frontier Village Historic Site and the Jackson Street Park. Consider adding wayfinding signs or creating a policy proposal to connect the two locations by sidewalk next time Jackson Street is repaved.
3. Formalize outreach plans for increasing church involvement with HTC projects.
4. Recruitment efforts should focus on building partnerships and relationships with other leaders from non-involved communities within the county. This extended recruitment could encourage more involvement by these groups within the community. Strategic partnerships are critical for increasing involvement and engagement with HTC.

- a. Representation is key to buy-in for non-involved communities. To increase non-involved membership, especially with younger community members, it is important to determine who are the influential leaders within these communities.
 - i. Who are the leaders with influence within this community? Not all influential people within the community are traditional or typical leaders.
 - ii. Finding these influencers will be crucial to attract younger members of the community to become involved with HTC.
- 5. Expand beyond the current communication efforts to bring both new community leaders and younger community members to the coalition. By increasing communications to the public, the coalition can share progress, updates, and requests, as well as garner interest in the program from residents of Clay county. This includes both external communications to the community as well as ensuring internal communications within the coalition to provide a consistent message.