

Cross-sector Partnership with the Non-profit Sector: Charitable and Health Promoting Organizations

Working together to create communities where it is easier for all children to live healthy lives.



Background

The Healthy Kids Community Challenge Burlington (HKCCB) worked with cross-sector partners to develop Healthy Kids Opportunity Sites to promote physical activity, healthy eating and hydration, as well as reduced screen-time. This program built on existing community programs by providing funds, resources, guides and toolkits.

The focus was to build on the assets of a community. One way they did this was by developing partnerships with the non-profit sector which includes organizations such as a club, society or association which operates solely for social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure or recreation or any other purpose except for profit. This case study focuses on the challenges, strategies and actions to inspire others' to develop a partnership with non-profit organizations. The aim is to highlight overall challenges experienced, recommended strategies and actions taken by the HKCCB that could serve as examples for others interested in working with those in the non-profit sector.



Challenges Experienced

- **Human resources/staff capacity:** Most non-profit organizations depend on volunteers and have limited paid staff capacity. Those with paid staff often find the roles very busy as they have multiple functions within the organization (e.g., program, fundraising and volunteer coordinator) and are already at maximum capacity.
- **Spending all the funds allocated:** Funds from the HKCCB program allocated for specific items such as space rental aren't always spent, as often these types of resources are provided as in-kind (contributions of good and services other than money/funds) by other community organizations. Time is spent renegotiating budget allocations to ensure all funds are utilized at the end of the project.

- **How being involved may affect current funding:** Some organizations are cautious about being involved and accepting funds for programming as there are concerns that doing so could jeopardize current funding arrangements.
- **Shifting culture, changing practices and the perception of discriminating against those living on low-income:** Asking this sector to change the types of food provided at community events so that food choices are healthier (e.g., adding fruit and vegetables) and asking organizations to remove or limit certain types of food (e.g., those with high sugar, or processed) incurred the risk of being perceived as being over prescriptive (making the choice to only provide healthy foods) to specific populations, as a large portion of clients being served by the non-profit organization have low-incomes.



Overall Recommended Strategies from HKCCB Experiences

- **Leverage relationships and share resources:** Build on the connections that non-profit organizations have created within the community. This sector demonstrates strong community development skills and capitalizes on sharing resources and securing in-kind contributions.
- **Have a champion:** Find someone within the organization/sector to champion participation in the program and/or partnership. Ensure commitment to not only champion broadly but to promote within their own organization.
- **Foster an environment of shared understanding and work together for change:** Ask what barriers they are experiencing or may experience in the future; both overall and related to the program and/or partnership. Create space for discussions in order to arrive at a shared understanding of the barriers and work together to identify ways to remove them and support working together for change. This includes addressing funding gaps.
- **Be flexible and adaptable:** Consider how to frame the program and messages to “meet the audience where they are at”. For example, related to providing food, the message was changed from providing the ‘healthiest foods’ to ‘healthier foods.’



Examples of Actions

- HKCCB was able to strengthen connections in the community. As they were talking with a lot of different sectors, they were able to share what they learned with other sectors such as the non-profit sector and encourage connections and sharing of resources. For example, the Neighborhood Support Worker would say “This group is doing something similar to what you are doing. You guys should meet and do it together and have more of an impact.” This led to new projects and programs outside of the HKCCB project emphasizing the function of partnerships created within the current program as a broader asset to the community.

- HKCCB created two ‘Neighborhood Support Worker’ positions. These are folks who went out and met with people within organizations (at all levels; front line to management) and had conversations to learn more about the sector, the organization and to identify ways each organization could work within the HKCCB. They often had the first contact for developing the relationship and built trust by sharing information about the partnership and identifying shared goals and objectives. This also helped inform the work of ‘Neighborhood Action Teams’ that included people from the community to develop an action plan for the HKCCB. These were paid part-time positions (~21 hours per week per person) at a cost of approximately \$20,000 per year per position and included other duties related to project (e.g., program planning and evaluation, development of resources, coordination of over 70 organizations).

Lesson Learned

Use the strengths of the community and build on them to develop trusting relationships.



About Keeping Kids Healthy through Collective Impact

This case study is part of an environmental scan serving to inform the Keeping Kids Healthy through Collective Impact project, an initiative that aims to build cross-sector linkages between health and social sectors in order to promote health equity and better address the social determinants of health. By sharing broadly the results from this case study, it is intended that others may find examples of strategies that can be applied in a variety of local contexts similar to those that were observed during the Healthy Kids Community Challenge activities as ways to promote cross-sector partnerships.

- To learn more about Healthy Kids Community Challenge Burlington visit [City of Burlington](#)

- For other ideas to build cross-sector partnerships, visit the Ontario Public Health Association’s [Keeping Kids Healthy through Collective Impact project](#)

- We want to hear from you! Visit [opha.on.ca/KeepingKidsHealthy.aspx](#) to learn how to write your own case study and submit for publication.

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