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### Promising Strategies: Case Examples

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**HEALTHY & ACTIVE  
COMMUNITIES**



**MFH**  
MISSOURI FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH

# Promising Strategies

.....  
**CASE EXAMPLES**

SPRING 2014

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Center for Public Health  
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Washington University in St. Louis



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Colorado Springs

# Table of Contents

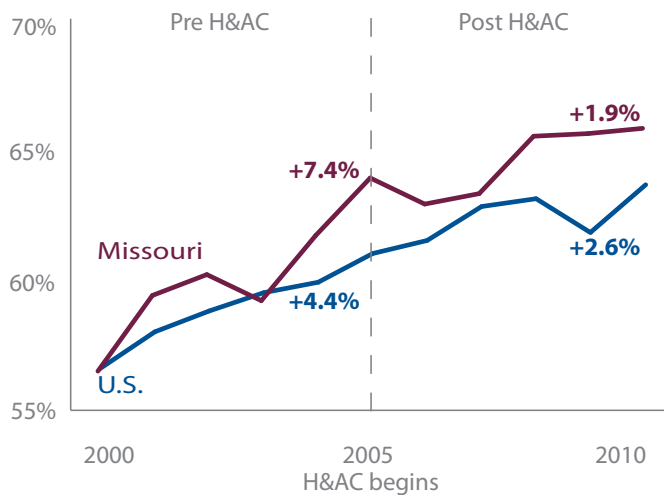
Introduction	1
Case Example 1: <i>Barton County Memorial Hospital</i>	5
Case Example 2: <i>Gateway Greening</i>	12

# Introduction

## Missouri Obesity Environment

In the last few decades, the United States has seen a steady increase in the prevalence of obesity. Several national, regional, and local funding efforts have launched in response to the rising obesity rates. The Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) established the Healthy & Active Communities (H&AC) initiative in 2005 and has invested over \$20 million to support H&AC projects. To date, H&AC projects have conducted activities in 62% of the counties in Missouri, and the City of St. Louis. In line with the national trend, statewide obesity rates continue to rise, signaling a **need for a continued focus on obesity prevention in Missouri**. However, since H&AC efforts first began, the proportion of Missourians that are **overweight or obese has increased at a slower rate**.

Figure 1a: Total percent of overweight and obese adults in Missouri and US: Five years before and after H&AC<sup>1</sup>

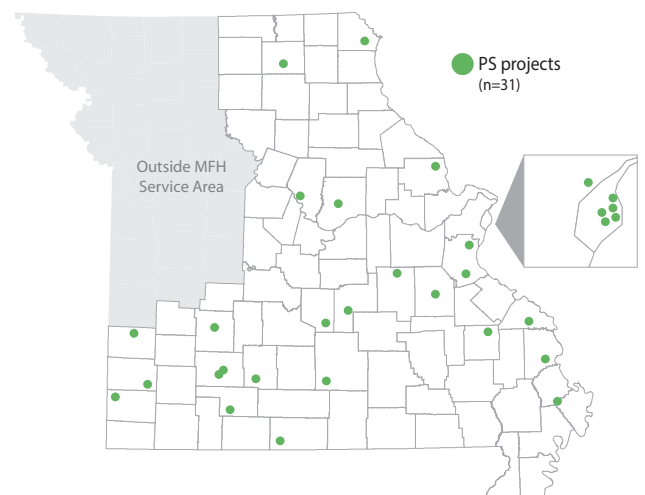


Missouri overweight and obesity rates continue to rise, but at a slightly **slower rate**.

## Healthy & Active Communities Initiative Overview

The H&AC initiative has funded 87 projects through several different funding approaches, including Model Practice Building (MPB), Innovative Funding (IF), and **Promising Strategies (PS)**. The PS funding was the final funding approach of the initiative and was informed by emerging research suggesting that **programming and education, combined with improved community design or access and public policies** encourages people to eat better and be more active throughout the day.<sup>2,3</sup> The purpose of this report is to provide examples of PS projects that promote healthy living, to provide key lessons from these example projects, to inform others doing similar work, and to inform future grantmaking strategies.

Figure 1b: MFH coverage area and location of PS projects



1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2000-2010). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

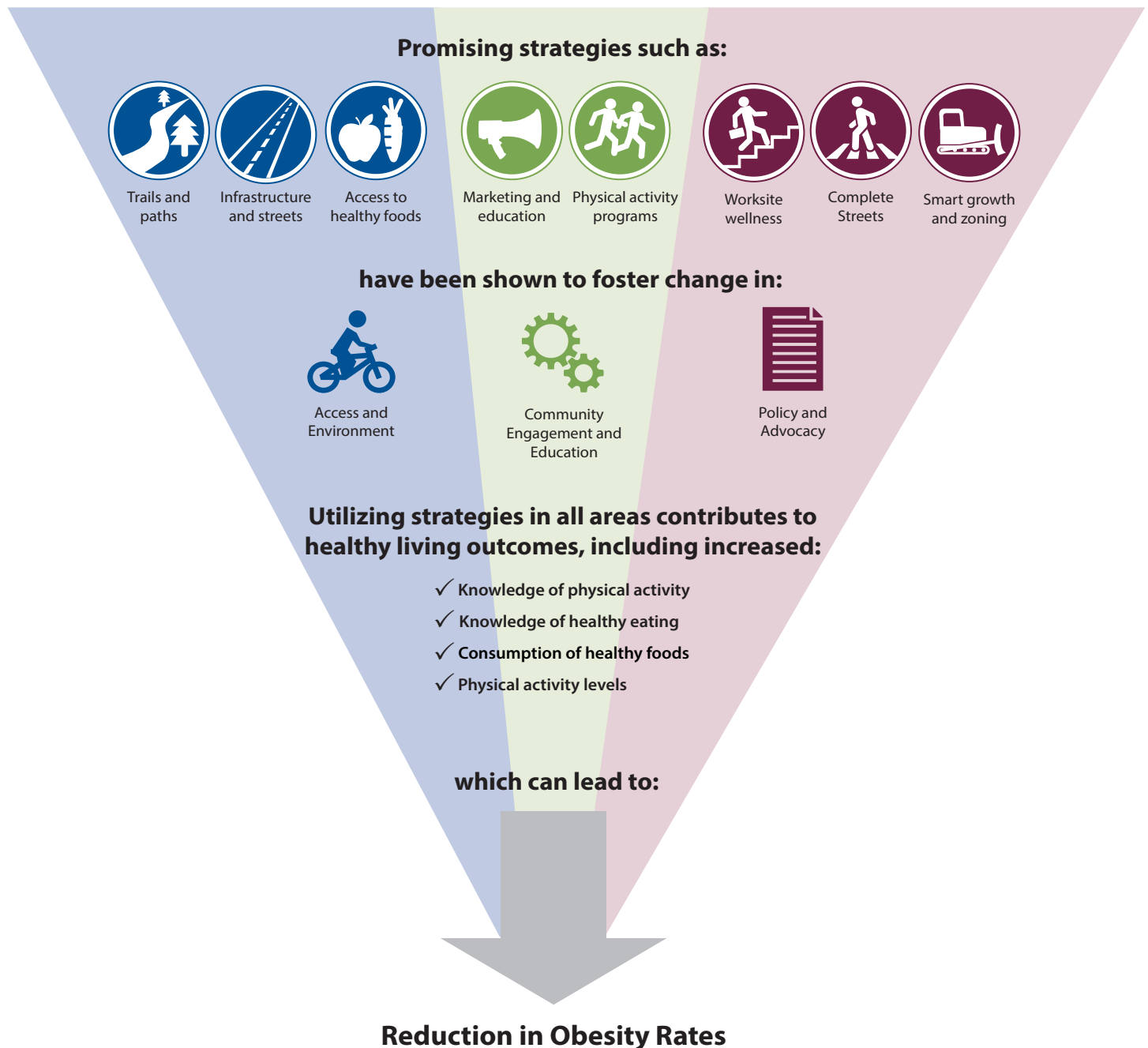
2 Kahn, E. B., Ramsey, L. T., Brownson, R. C., Heath, G. W., Howze, E. H., Powell, K. E., et al. (2002). The effectiveness of interventions to increase physical activity: A systematic review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 22(4S), 73-107.

3 Brownson, R. C., Haire-Joshu, D., & Luke, D. A. (2006). Shaping the context of health: A review of environmental and policy approaches in the prevention of chronic diseases. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 27, 341-370.

### What led to the Promising Strategies funding approach?

In recent years, obesity prevention research has emphasized the need to expand beyond individual programmatic changes and incorporate more systemic changes, such as environmental and policy approaches, to more effectively prevent obesity.<sup>1</sup> Figure 1c shows promising strategies for healthy eating and active living projects, how these strategies support positive change in different categories, and the expected healthy living outcomes of implementing a multifaceted approach across the three categories.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1c: Emergence of the PS Funding Approach<sup>2</sup>



1 Brownson, R. C., Haire-Joshu, D., & Luke, D. A. (2006). Shaping the context of health: A review of environmental and policy approaches in the prevention of chronic diseases. *Annual Review of Public Health, 27*, 341-370.

2 Convergence Partnership. (2008). *Promising strategies for creating healthy eating and active living environments*. Prepared by Prevention Institute. Retrieved from [http://www.convergencepartnership.org/atf/cf/%7B245A9B44-6DED-4ABD-A392-AE583809E350%7D/CP\\_Promising%20Strategies\\_printed.pdf](http://www.convergencepartnership.org/atf/cf/%7B245A9B44-6DED-4ABD-A392-AE583809E350%7D/CP_Promising%20Strategies_printed.pdf)

### Key activity categories of Promising Strategies' projects

Informed by a 2008 report by the Convergence Partnership,<sup>1</sup> the PS funding approach required H&AC applicants to include at least one "promising strategy" from three different categories. These three categories included:



**Access and Environment:** Improving access to healthy food and places to engage in physical activity by altering the physical environment (e.g., building community gardens)



**Community Engagement and Education:** Developing outreach, communication, and education strategies that get people to think about positive change and foster knowledge and behavior change around healthy eating and physical activity (e.g., marketing campaigns, walking clubs)



**Policy and Advocacy:** Educating decisionmakers about written policies that make the healthy choice the default choice (e.g., public use of school tracks)

Implementing at least one strategy in each category increases the likelihood of having a greater impact on healthy eating and/or physical activity, because activities are conducted across multiple spheres of influence (e.g., individual-level, organizational-level, community-level). PS projects typically implemented one to three strategies in each category.

### Which PS Projects are Case Examples?

MFH selected several PS-funded projects as applied examples to share with a broader audience. These projects were selected as case examples on the evidence that they:



**Worked with multi-sectoral partners** who provided a vast array of expertise and support to promote an integrated approach to prevention of obesity in local communities.



**Established goals, tracked progress, and met healthy living outcomes**, including demonstrating positive knowledge and/or behavior change in target population(s).



**Utilized strategies that supported project sustainability and expansion** of healthy living efforts in the community.

<sup>1</sup> Convergence Partnership. (2008). *Promising strategies for creating healthy eating and active living environments*. Prepared by Prevention Institute. Retrieved from [http://www.convergencepartnership.org/atf/cf/%7B245A9B44-6DED-4ABD-A392-AE583809E350%7D/CP\\_Promising%20Strategies\\_printed.pdf](http://www.convergencepartnership.org/atf/cf/%7B245A9B44-6DED-4ABD-A392-AE583809E350%7D/CP_Promising%20Strategies_printed.pdf)

### ***Barton County Memorial Hospital***

In 2009, MFH funded the Barton County Memorial Hospital (BCMh) to implement the *Better Lifestyle, Exercise, and Nutrition Daily (BLEND)* project for three years. The *BLEND* project served the rural communities of Lamar, Golden City, and Liberal in southwest Missouri. The project focused on increasing opportunities for physical activity in these communities by changing the physical environment and reinforcing the changes with community education and adoption of written policies.

#### **Key activities and outcomes of the *BLEND* project**

- Built or revitalized **8 trails, pathways, or tracks**
  - Demonstrated a **21% increase in usage of the hospital trail** by the end of the project
- Facilitated the adoption of **4 local healthy living policies** affecting over **12,000 community residents**, including one worksite wellness policy at BCMH
  - The **proportion of BCMH employees participating in the wellness program increased 30%** over the course of the project
- Reached approximately **345 people** through healthy living educational classes
  - **A majority (51%) of class participants demonstrated increased understanding** of the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity

### ***Gateway Greening***

In 2009, MFH funded Gateway Greening to implement the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project for three years. The project sought to improve access to healthy foods for underserved areas in the St. Louis region by strengthening the network of community gardens. The project developed four strategically located Community Resource Gardens (CRGs), which serve as centers of education and leadership on gardening and urban agriculture for other community gardens and gardeners. CRGs increased the region's capacity to provide locally grown, healthy food to its residents.

#### **Key activities and outcomes of the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project**

- **Increased** the total number of **community gardens** in the region by **41%**
- Established **9 local garden** at urban daycare centers
  - **Increased healthy food servings in participating daycares by 15%**
- Donated approximately **4,500 pounds of garden produce** to local food pantries
- Facilitated, with the City of St. Louis, **free water access** to community gardens in the region
- Provided **educational and networking opportunities** for gardeners and residents
  - **Increased food preparation skills (63%), food budgeting skills (56%), advocacy skills (80%), and consumption of healthy foods (85%)** of various participants





# Barton County Memorial Hospital:

## *Better Lifestyle, Exercise, and Nutrition Daily (BLEND)*

### Project Overview

In 2009, MFH funded the **Barton County Memorial Hospital (BCMh)** to implement the *Better Lifestyle, Exercise, and Nutrition Daily (BLEND)* project for three years. Research has shown that rural residents are less likely than sub-urban or urban residents to meet recommended physical activity levels.<sup>1</sup> The *BLEND* project sought to increase opportunities for healthy living in the county by targeting the **rural communities** of Lamar, Golden City, and Liberal.

In 2008, a local collaboration of individuals and organizations conducted a county-wide needs assessment and identified **access to walking trails and opportunities for people to be active with a friend or family member** as top physical activity needs. Furthermore, 90% of the participants who claimed to be physically inactive stated they were interested in becoming more physically active. Utilizing the assessment findings, BCMh identified walking trails and tracks as a priority because of the lack of places to walk, run, or bike in the area. Below are the primary ways the *BLEND* project increased access to places for active living across the three communities.



**Improved access** to places for active living by:

- Building **three new trails and one connector pathway**
  - **Increased usage** of hospital trail by **21%** over course of project
- Revitalizing **three school tracks and one city trail**



Engaged the community through **healthy lifestyle education** by:

- Providing **healthy lifestyle classes to 170 adults and 175 children**
  - **Increased understanding** of the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity **by the majority (51%)** of adult class participants
- Hosting **two walking events** (e.g., 5k Run/Walk) for **85 participants**
- Training **four lifestyle coaches** to deliver education classes after conclusion of funding



Educated decisionmakers about written **policy changes** to support physical activity in the community by:

- Facilitating the adoption of **three joint-use agreements**, which permit use of school facilities (e.g., track) during non-school hours for roughly **12,000 community members**
- Facilitating the adoption of a **worksite wellness policy** at BCMh, affecting **240 hospital employees**
  - The proportion of employees participating in wellness program increased from **20% to 50%** from the beginning to the end of the project
- Educating city council about the benefits of a **Complete Streets policy** in Lamar
  - **Complete Streets** is a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained for all modes of transportation (e.g., walking, biking, driving automobiles, riding public transportation)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Parks, S. E., Housemann, R. A., & Brownson, R. C. (2003). Differential correlates of physical activity in urban and rural adults of various socioeconomic backgrounds in the United States. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 57(1), 29–35.

<sup>2</sup> Smart Growth America. (2010). *National Complete Streets Coalition*. Retrieved from <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>

Like many other projects, BCMH found **activities related to the Policy and Advocacy category were the most challenging**. Regardless of those challenges, BCMH reported now having a better understanding of the value of incorporating policy work into chronic disease prevention.

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*"I understand more now...how vitally important it is [to do policy work]...but to effect change, I firmly believe you do have to have all three [categories]."*

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## What Contributed to *BLEND's* Success?

**3 main factors** contributed to the overall success of the *BLEND* project. Specifically, the project:



**Worked with multi-sectoral partners** who provided a vast array of expertise and support to promote an integrated approach to prevention of obesity in local communities.

- Engaged **21 partners** from **7 sectors**
- Received **6 types of contributions** (e.g., people's time, materials, marketing) from partners to support and sustain *BLEND* project activities



**Established goals, tracked progress, and met healthy living outcomes**, including demonstrating positive knowledge and/or behavior change in target population(s).

- Met or made significant progress on **nearly all project-specific objectives**
- **Increased understanding of the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity** of healthy living education class participants
- **Increased participation** in BCMH employee wellness program, and **increased usage** of BCMH trail



**Utilized strategies that supported project sustainability and expansion** of healthy living efforts in the community.

- Planned to sustain the **majority of BLEND project activities** after MFH funding ends
- **Led to additional healthy living efforts** in the community

The remainder of this case example provides details on the activities and outcomes of the *BLEND* project that contributed to their success based on the three factors described above. Additionally, the case example of the *BLEND* project includes key lessons learned that can inform the work of others implementing projects that promote physical activity in their local communities.

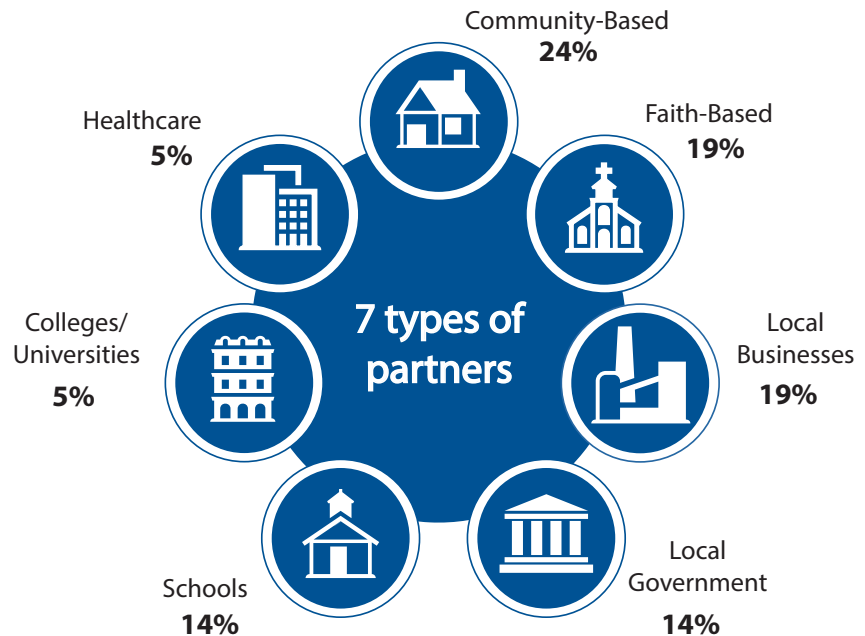


## Worked with multi-sectoral partners

The *BLEND* project engaged a diverse set of multi-sectoral partners to implement project activities across the PS categories. Partnerships contributed to *BLEND*'s overall implementation, success, and sustainability. As seen in Figure 2a, BCMH engaged 21 partners from 7 sectors to support and implement *BLEND* project activities.

MOUs with partners formalized expectations of roles and responsibilities.

Figure 2a: Proportion of *BLEND* project's overall partners by type of partner



Establishing and submitting memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with key partners was a requirement of the application process. BCMH found the use of MOUs to be extremely helpful. For example, MOUs were leveraged when BCMH encountered resistance by partners who were not following through with planned contributions, as a means to get partners and activities back on track.



The *BLEND* project relied on a diverse set of partners and contributions from partners to support activities. For example, the *BLEND* project engaged partners to help implement project activities, relying on partners to provide people's time, additional funding, materials (e.g., tools), project marketing (e.g., trail maps), technology support, and advocacy for policies (e.g., joint-use agreements). Engaging a diverse set of partners to provide a variety of contributions supported the implementation and sustainability of environment changes, helped to get community members involved, and created a sense of pride and ownership of the trails and tracks.

The *BLEND* project **engaged the least diverse set of partners and received the least diverse types of contributions for Policy and Advocacy** activities. The only institutions that supported these activities were the schools where the joint-use agreements were adopted.

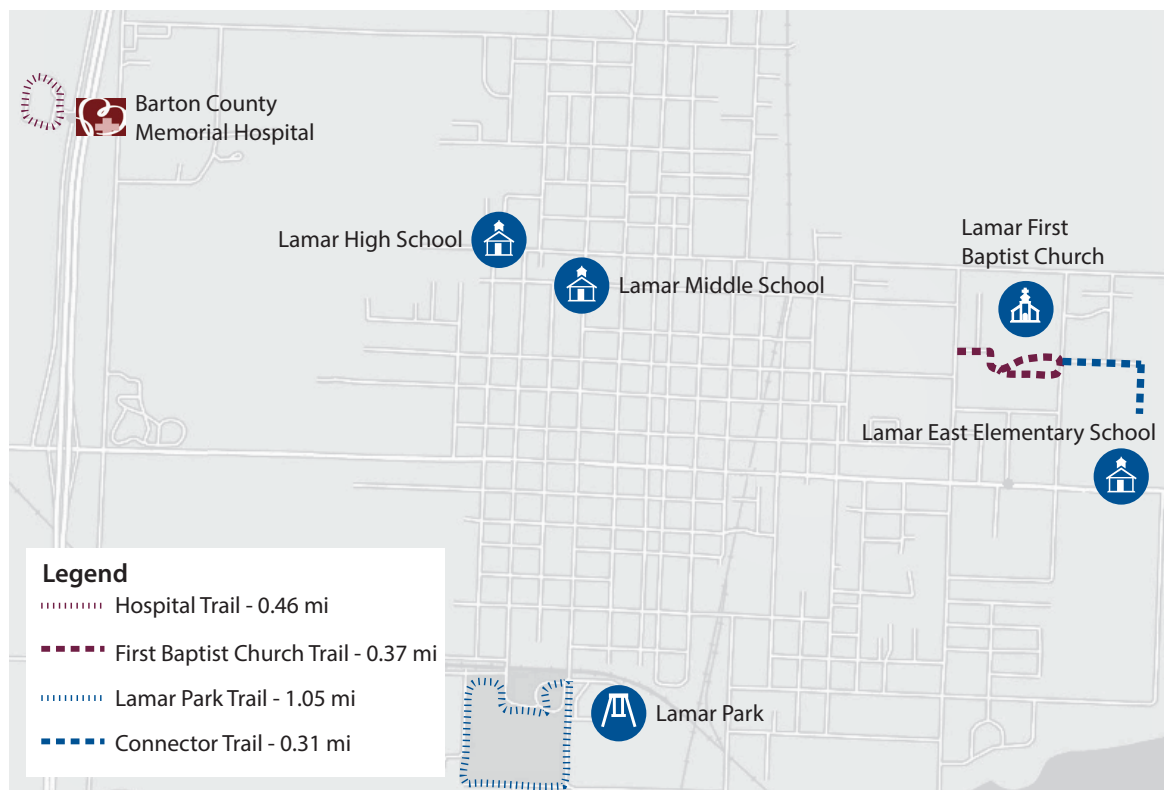
Although some momentum was gained, the planned Complete Streets policy in Lamar has yet to be adopted. Challenges with having the policy adopted during the project period may be partly attributed to having less diverse partnerships and partner contributions to support this work. Like many funded projects, BCMH reported that project staff lacked policy expertise, and **they felt they could have benefitted from partnering with an expert** to support the development of policy language and an advocacy plan, including the best practices for communicating with different types of policy makers (e.g., city council members, hospital leadership). Identifying a partner with policy or advocacy expertise could have increased the *BLEND* project's capacity to do this type of work.



### **Established goals, tracked progress, and met healthy living outcomes**

Establishing clear goals, objectives, and an evaluation plan are important components for monitoring and demonstrating the impact of project activities and outcomes.<sup>1</sup> BCMH identified **13 project-specific objectives, of which 92% were fully or partially met**. For example, the *BLEND* project greatly increased access to places to be physically active in three communities by revitalizing (e.g., resurfaced, installed lighting) **three school tracks** and **one park trail**, building **three new trails** (hospital, church, and park), and building **one new connector trail** to make the newly built church trail more accessible to the school and nearby neighborhood. Figure 2c shows the four built environment changes completed in the largest of the three communities, Lamar.

Figure 2c: Map of built environment changes in Lamar completed by *BLEND*



<sup>1</sup> W. K. Kellogg Foundation. (2004). *Evaluation Handbook*. Retrieved from: <http://www.wkcf.org/resource-directory/resource/2010/w-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook>



The number of BCMH employees participating in the worksite wellness program **increased by 30%** over the course of project. Based on employee feedback, BCMH revised the wellness policy to provide a cash incentive instead of paid time off. With this revision, **50% of employees** now take advantage of the program. Also, over the course of the project there was a **21% increase in usage** of the newly built trail at the hospital.

Furthermore, the *BLEND* project demonstrated **increased understanding about the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity among the majority (51%) of adult healthy living class participants**. Although the project tracked and demonstrated **increased physical activity levels of some adult education class participants**, challenges with collecting and reporting data limited BCMH's ability to demonstrate the change initially targeted. Based on these challenges, BCMH indicated they would consider **identifying staff (internal and/or external) dedicated to leading evaluation activities for future projects**, to increase the likelihood that impact of their project or activities is appropriately measured and documented.



### **Utilized strategies that support project sustainability and expansion**

Positive public health outcomes in the communities that H&AC projects serve can only be achieved if effective programs, policies, and environmental changes are sustained over time.<sup>1,2</sup> BCMH **employed multiple strategies** to support the likelihood that *BLEND* project activities and outcomes would be sustained. As a result, **nearly all of the BLEND project components were planned to be sustained** after the end of PS funding, including: the maintenance of built environment changes, ongoing provision of programs and education, and adopted policies. The *BLEND* project **utilized four main strategies** to increase the likelihood that project activities would be sustained, with one to three different strategies employed to sustain activities in each PS category. They **relied most on cultivating partnerships and stabilizing funding through cost absorption** to sustain activities of their project.

#### Sustainability strategies employed by BCMH:

- **Cultivated partnerships:** Fostered support for and ownership of activities among stakeholders
- **Stabilized funding:** Established a consistent and/or diverse financial base for activities
- **Built capacity:** Increased the ability of others (internally and/or externally) to conduct or lead activities or efforts, through training, staffing strategies, and leadership development
- **Formalized policies or procedures:** Incorporated activities into formal policies or processes to promote continued support

1 Shediach-Rizkallah, M. C., & Bone, L. R. (1998). Planning for the sustainability of community-based health programs: Conceptual frameworks and future directions for research, practice, and policy. *Health Education Research*, 13(1), 87-108.

2 Scheirer, M. A. (2005). Is sustainability possible? A review and commentary on empirical studies of program sustainability. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 26(3), 320-347.

### *Cultivated partnerships*

Before the *BLEND* project began, BCMH **cultivated partnerships** with a number of institutions and **established community support** for the project. MOUs were written to clearly outline expectations and roles of partners. Through these MOUs, **partners agreed to take responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the city trails and school tracks** after the project ended, and school partners also agreed to keep the tracks available for community use through joint-use agreements. As a result of the strong partnership developed with About Our Kids (AOK), AOK continues to provide *BLEND* education classes to its program participants. Having **diverse community organizations invested in and committed to the success of the project helped to increase the likelihood that these efforts would continue.**

### *Stabilized funding*

Through the **absorption of associated costs**, the funded organization, BCMH, provided a **consistent financial base** for several *BLEND* project activities, including:

- The maintenance of the hospital trail
- Ongoing provision of *BLEND* education classes
- Continuation of the BCMH employee wellness program

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*“The wellness program at Barton County Memorial Hospital continues to **expand and grow**. Our programs have become more diversified to address different life issues that affect the wellness of the whole person.”*

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Project staff will be able **to continue to provide *BLEND* education to various community organizations as requested.** Supportive leadership within BCMH helped to establish this sustainability strategy.

### *Built capacity*

Prior to project implementation, BCMH planned for the sustainability of the educational components (e.g., *BLEND* curriculum) by **building external capacity to deliver educational classes** into the program’s design. The project utilized a train-the-trainer model where qualified project staff recruited and trained individuals in the community to become *BLEND* lifestyle coaches. Lifestyle coaches were provided training and materials to allow them to lead *BLEND* educational classes. By building the capacity of the lifestyle coaches, community members were able to receive physical activity and healthy eating education courses after the conclusion of PS funding.

### *Formalized policies or procedures*

The policy changes made as part of *BLEND* will continue to impact the community **indefinitely** since the changes were **formally written and adopted**. In addition to the schools where the tracks were revitalized, the greater communities will be able to continue accessing these sites for physical activity because of the adopted joint-use agreements. As a result of the employee wellness policy at the hospital, BCMH employees will continue

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*“...Administration saw the value in a healthier work force...”*

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to work in an environment that values their health. These policies were likely adopted due to the support both within BCMH and from the greater community, the strong partnerships that developed prior to project implementation, and the community’s ongoing involvement with the project. These components have all contributed to the success of *BLEND*’s sustainability.

### **Other healthy living efforts that emerged out of BLEND**

The *BLEND* project has drawn attention to the issue of obesity and inspired additional community-wide healthy living efforts in Barton County. For example, the *BLEND* project's activities and efforts led to:

➤ **An additional community needs assessment being conducted**

- After the trails and tracks were created and improved, a subsequent needs assessment was conducted, identifying a community wellness center as residents' top priority to continue to increase opportunities for physical activity. The reoccurring evaluation of ongoing needs demonstrates that the community continues to prioritize healthy living solutions for its residents.

➤ **Planning for the development of a community wellness center**

- A committee was established to explore funding opportunities, including a potential tax initiative, as a means to financially support the development of a community wellness center. The committee is also currently developing concept drawings for the center.

➤ **Continued advocacy for the adoption of a Complete Streets policy in Lamar**

- The Change Club, a coalition of local organizations with an interest in healthy living, continues to promote the adoption of the livable streets plan.
- In collaboration with local governments and Trailnet, a St. Louis-based community organization, the city of Lamar is including lane striping in the development of a new overpass.

➤ **Expanded enhancements, revitalizations, and usage of trails and tracks**

- The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) in Liberal added striping to their track.
- Fit stations and other improvements (e.g., lighting) have been added to the Golden City Trail by a partner organization through a Physical Education Program grant.
- A walking/running group is being formed in Lamar.



For more information on the *BLEND* project,  
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# Gateway Greening: *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health*

## Project Overview

In 2009, the Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) funded **Gateway Greening** to implement the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project for three years. In 2006, several neighborhoods in St. Louis were identified as having fewer supermarkets than is typical for the region, and the supermarkets that did exist had few healthy options (e.g., fruits, vegetables, and low-fat foods).<sup>1</sup> The project sought to **improve access to healthy foods for underserved areas in the St. Louis region** by strengthening the network of community gardens. Research has found that access to community gardens leads to an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, making this approach a promising strategy to promote healthy eating.<sup>2</sup> Below are the primary ways the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project sought to improve access to healthy, fresh food across the PS funding areas.



Strengthened the **network of community gardens** throughout the St. Louis region by:

- Developing **four strategically located Community Resource Gardens (CRGs)**
  - **Increased** the total number of **community gardens in the region by 41%**
- Establishing **9 local gardens** at urban daycare centers
  - **Increased healthy food servings in participating daycares by 15%**
- Donating approximately **4,500 pounds of garden produce** to local food pantries



Provided **educational and networking opportunities** for gardeners, residents, and daycare centers by:

- Hosting annual **Community Garden Summits**, with more than **430 attendees** over three years
  - Over half of 2013 Community Garden Summit attendees reported that they **learned something new about food policies**, and more than 80% **learned new advocacy skills**
- Developing an **8-week course, *Growing Gardeners***, reaching **96 participants**
  - **Increased horticultural knowledge and leadership skills** (e.g., volunteer recruitment, developing community partnerships) of participants
- Partnering with Operation Food Search to provide ***Cooking Matters* classes** on preparing nutritious meals on a budget



Advocated for **policies and practices** that promote using urban land to grow healthy food by:

- Educating **community leaders and aldermen** about community gardens
- Partnering with the City of St. Louis to establish **free water for community gardens**
- Encouraging local farmer's market to establish system for accepting **Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) assistance vouchers** as a form of payment, which is currently accepted

<sup>1</sup> Baker, E., Schootman, M., Barnidge, E., & Kelly, C. (2006). Access to foods that enable individuals to adhere to dietary guidelines: The role of race and poverty. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 3(3), 1-11.

<sup>2</sup> Draper, C., & Freedman, D. (2010). Review and analysis of the benefits, purposes, and motivations associated with community gardening in the United States. *Journal of Community Practice*, 18, 458-492.



## Promising Strategies Case Examples: Gateway Greening

Like many PS projects, advocacy and policy work was a new approach for the organization, which had traditionally focused on community development. They reported that no organization is an expert in all areas, thus **targeted support on creative ways to integrate strategies was needed**. After building advocacy experience through their PS project, Gateway Greening took away several key lessons that will inform advocacy or policy work in the future:

- Allow sufficient time to build partner support for advocacy and policy goals
- Dedicate staff time to build capacity in this area
- Adapt and redirect efforts when faced with challenges



Despite facing challenges implementing some of the policy and advocacy activities they had planned, Gateway Greening was able to adapt and refocus their efforts. For example, after efforts to encourage Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) access at a local farmer's market stalled, the project redirected advocacy activities towards working with city government to provide free water for community garden sites, which is now available through the City of St. Louis. Eventually, EBT access was made available at the market, in part due to the conversations Gateway Greening initiated.

### **The Community Resource Garden model**

The 2006 study helped to inform the development of the **Community Resource Garden (CRG) model**. Four established community gardens became CRGs, to serve as centers of education and leadership on gardening and urban agriculture. The CRG model (Figure 3a) allowed CRGs to provide resources to smaller gardens in neighboring areas, educational workshops and gardening materials to community gardeners, and shared spaces for community events (e.g., rain barrel workshops, yoga in the garden).

Gateway Greening utilized the results of a **community study to inform and guide the design and implementation** of their project.

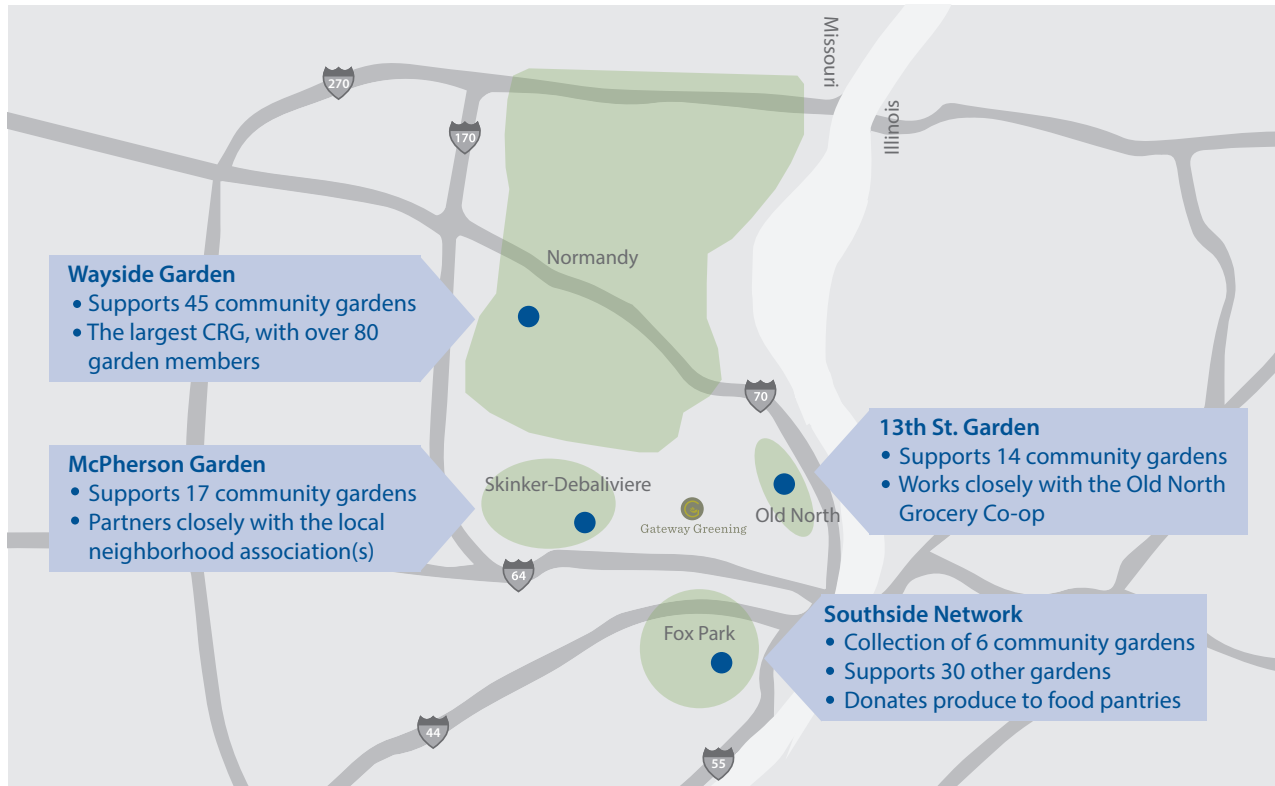
Figure 3a: Community Resource Garden model



## Promising Strategies Case Examples: Gateway Greening

Gateway Greening partnered with local organizations in each neighborhood by training garden leaders and providing initial planning, resources, and educational classes. The map in Figure 3b illustrates the regional dispersion of the four CRGs, with the approximate areas served by each CRG shown in green. The service areas vary in size depending on the capacity of each CRG and the distribution of nearby community gardens. These CRGs supported over 100 other community gardens in the region.

Figure 3b: CRG locations and service areas in St. Louis, MO region

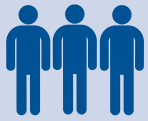


The geographical spread of the CRGs expanded Gateway Greening's ability to support community gardening at a regional level. Since the start of the project there has been a **41% increase in total number of community gardens in the region.**



## What Contributed to Gateway Greening's Success?

**3 main factors** contributed to the overall success of the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project. Specifically, the project:



**Worked with multi-sectoral partners** who provided a vast array of expertise and support to promote an integrated approach to prevention of obesity in local communities.

- Engaged **27 partners** from **8 sectors**
- Received **8 types of contributions** (e.g., people's time, materials, advocacy) from partners to support and sustain *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project activities



**Established goals, tracked progress, and met healthy living outcomes**, including demonstrating positive knowledge and/or behavior change in target population(s).

- Met or made significant progress on **nearly all project-specific objectives**
- **Increased horticultural knowledge and leadership skills** of *Growing Gardeners* class participants
- **Increased consumption of fresh foods** and improved food preparation and budgeting skills for *Cooking Matters* class participants
- **Increased advocacy skills** in Community Garden Summit attendees
- **Increased healthy food servings** at participating daycares



**Utilized strategies that supported project sustainability and expansion** of healthy living efforts in the community.

- Planned to sustain the **majority of project activities** after MFH funding ends
- **Led to additional healthy living efforts** in the community
- **Secured additional funding** to establish a diverse financial base for activities

The remainder of this case example provides details on the activities and outcomes of the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project that contributed to their success based on the three factors described above. Additionally, the case example includes key lessons learned that can inform the work of others implementing projects that promote increased access to healthy food.



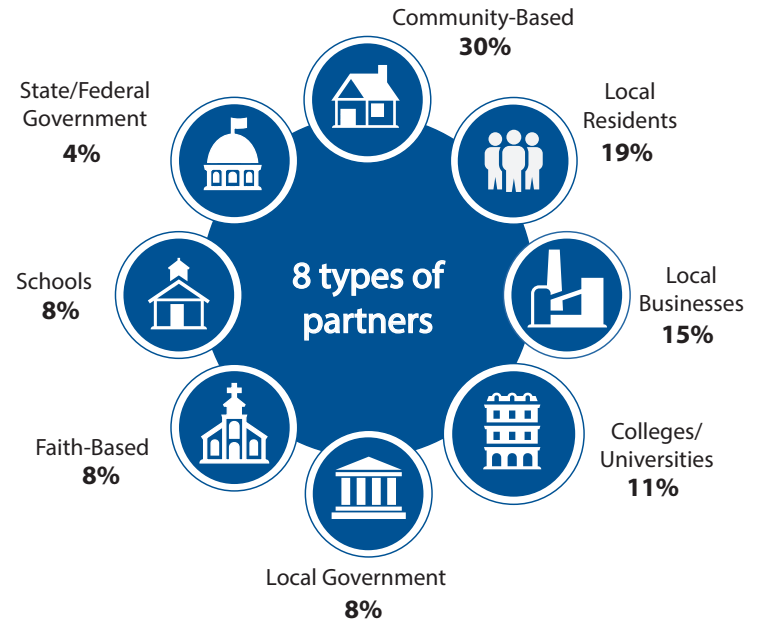
## Worked with multi-sectoral partners

Gateway Greening knew that to be successful in creating a community of gardeners and increasing access to fresh food, they **needed to involve a diverse set of partners** (as seen in Figure 3c), who shared the same mission. The project engaged a total of **27 partners from 8 sectors** (e.g., schools, local businesses) to implement project activities, provide expertise, and sustain project activities. Nearly half of the partnerships formed for the project were with **community-based organizations** or **local residents** in the neighborhoods supported by the CRGs.

Community-based organizations and local residents made extremely **diverse contributions to the project**, such as providing space and materials for gardens, marketing and promotion of gardens and events, people's time, and advocacy support (e.g., communicating with policymakers). Local residents and community-based organizations were critical in helping the project **build local buy-in and support**. Gateway Greening partnered closely with local residents to develop a vision for each CRG, including identifying what services were most desired by community members. As a result, the CRGs have **long-term support** in place, and local residents have a **network of individuals that see each other as assets and rely on each other**.



Figure 3c: Proportion of overall partners by type of partner



Gateway Greening strategically **built support** by cultivating partnerships within each of the CRG neighborhoods and **engaged partners that had specialized skills or experience** to support project activities.

Since single organizations cannot be experts in all areas, Gateway Greening looked to a diverse set of partners **to provide necessary expertise to support or conduct certain project activities**. For example, Gateway Greening relied on local government officials to provide advice and expertise around advocacy efforts, and relied on staff from universities to help develop horticultural course curricula for the *Growing Gardeners* series and conduct the overall evaluation of the project.



### **Established goals, tracked progress, and met healthy living outcomes**

Establishing clear goals, objectives, and an evaluation plan are important components for monitoring and demonstrating the impact of project activities and outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Gateway Greening identified **15 project-specific objectives** for their project, of which **93% were fully or partially met**.

Gateway Greening was **most successful in meeting objectives related to community engagement and education**. For example:

- ▶ *Growing Gardeners* classes built the advanced gardening skills of participants **by increasing horticultural knowledge and leadership skills** (e.g., volunteer recruitment, developing community partnerships).
- ▶ Over half of *Cooking Matters* participants reported **learning food preparation and budgeting skills**, and 85% reported **increasing consumption of fresh foods**.
- ▶ Over half of 2013 Community Garden Summit attendees reported that they **learned something new about food policies**, and more than 80% **learned new advocacy skills**.

Gateway Greening **strategically selected goals** that would be **attainable** within the time frame and scope of their project.

Success in meeting objectives about learning and community engagement was a result of **creating strong partnerships** to develop and implement the programs. For example, the organization relied on partners' technical expertise in providing education courses to develop a curriculum for the now extremely popular *Growing Gardeners* series, whose graduates have taken



program knowledge back to support local community gardens and created new initiatives, such as developing a community garden start-up program and sharing how to start your own seeds at home. Gateway Greening was also **successful in meeting objectives related to improving the environment for healthy eating** by tracking progress towards the establishment of CRGs and daycare gardens and **increasing healthy food servings in participating daycares by 15%**.

**Adapting to unforeseen challenges** that occurred during implementation helped the project to be successful in this area. For example, the project initially planned to add two CRGs each year via an application process. When no gardens submitted applications in 2011, project staff realized something was not working. Talking with prospective gardens, Gateway Greening learned that individual gardens lacked the capacity to take on the additional responsibilities of a CRG. Incorporating a "network" model, where a group of gardens shared responsibilities associated with a CRG and supported a primary physical garden site, Gateway Greening was able to identify a network of six community gardens to add as a Community Resource Garden network, now known as the Southside Network.

<sup>1</sup> W. K. Kellogg Foundation. (2004). *Evaluation Handbook*. Retrieved from: <http://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2010/w-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook>



### **Utilized strategies that support project sustainability and expansion**

Positive public health outcomes in the communities that PS projects serve can only be achieved if effective programs, policies, and environmental changes are sustained over time.<sup>1,2</sup> Gateway Greening **employed multiple strategies** to sustain various components of the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project. As a result, **nearly all project components were planned to be sustained after the end of PS funding**, including: the maintenance of gardens, community events and education, and ongoing advocacy efforts. Gateway Greening's project utilized four main strategies to increase the likelihood that project activities would be sustained, with one to two different strategies employed to sustain each activity. The project **relied most on stabilizing funding by garnering additional funding and cultivating partnerships**, as their primary sustainability strategies.

#### Sustainability strategies employed by Gateway Greening:

- **Stabilized funding:** Established a consistent and/or diverse financial base for activities
- **Cultivated partnerships:** Fostered support for and ownership of activities among stakeholders
- **Built capacity:** Increased the ability of others (internally and/or externally) to conduct or lead activities or efforts, through training, staffing strategies, and leadership development
- **Formalized policies or procedures:** Incorporated activities into formal policies or processes to promote continued support

#### *Stabilized funding*

To sustain or expand project components, Gateway Greening staff looked for additional funding. Incorporating a focus on improving health into their goals opened the organization's eyes to other kinds of funding that similar organizations were receiving but that they never knew existed. Now project activities are supported by **funding from the fields of business, government, and health**. For example:

- Funding (\$6,000) from Monsanto, a global agriculture company headquartered in St. Louis, to support the existing daycare gardens.
- Funding (\$5,000) from the Missouri Department of Agriculture will support the continuation of the *Growing Gardeners* course.
- An additional five-year grant (\$450,000) from MFH will sustain the continuation of advocacy and education efforts related to community gardens in the region.

Several project activities have also been **incorporated into Gateway Greening's core services**. Gateway Greening will provide resources to operate project components, such as the annual Community Garden Summit. Additionally, the organization will promote and support the CRGs as they continue to operate.

1 Shediac-Rizkallah, M. C., & Bone, L. R. (1998). Planning for the sustainability of community-based health programs: Conceptual frameworks and future directions for research, practice, and policy. *Health Education Research*, 13(1), 87-108.

2 Scheirer, M. A. (2005). Is sustainability possible? A review and commentary on empirical studies of program sustainability. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 26(3), 320-347.

## Promising Strategies Case Examples: Gateway Greening

### *Cultivated partnerships*

Gateway Greening designed the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project to build the commitment of communities to operate the CRGs after the initial three years of PS funding from MFH. By **encouraging community buy-in during the initial phases of planning** a new CRG, the project sought to develop ownership of the gardens among community residents. Today, the four CRGs continue to provide access to healthy foods, opportunities to work outdoors, and areas for the communities to gather during the growing season.

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*“The greatest success of our project would be the building of CRGs, as well as **building a network of individuals within those communities that...see each other as assets and rely on each other.**”*

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### *Built capacity*

Gateway Greening’s efforts to **build the capacity of both internal staff and external partners** made the continuation of project activities after initial funding ended possible. Internally, **AmeriCorps VISTA<sup>1</sup> interns provided volunteer service** for the development of the CRGs by working on-site to help promote activities and guide implementation. Not only did their work build the confidence of garden leaders to successfully manage their gardens, but the internships also created a pathway to fill longer-term staffing needs of the organization. Since beginning the project, several VISTA interns have been hired as full-time staff. Gateway Greening plans to continue to support the organization’s activities and cultivate future staff through more VISTA internships.

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*“We hired AmeriCorps VISTAs as staff because we’ve trained them, and they **understand the organization and are committed to the mission.**”*

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Building capacity was also **incorporated into the CRG model**. Garden leaders participated in an 8-week leadership course, *Growing Gardeners*, that included topics on garden management, recruiting volunteers, and building community partnerships. Developing these skills helped to ensure the gardens would continue to operate successfully in the future, even without the direct involvement of Gateway Greening staff.

### *Formalized policies or procedures*

Educational advocacy efforts to establish supports for community gardens led to the creation of the *Water Access for Community Garden Program*, now offered by the City of St. Louis. Gateway Greening will continue to work with the city through a formal application process to support the provision of free water to qualifying community gardens. By **positioning the program as part of the city’s services**, a potential 150 gardens throughout the region can obtain access to free water.



<sup>1</sup> Operated through the federal government, AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates intern with a community-based organization for 8-10 weeks during the summer. After completing the term of service, volunteers may receive funding towards higher education expenses or a post-service stipend.

### Other healthy living efforts that emerged out of Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health

In addition to sustaining existing project components, activities of the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project have inspired the development of new projects external to Gateway Greening and encouraged the organization to expand its own activities to target new populations and strategies.

#### External efforts

The CRG model was **designed to develop garden leaders that serve as catalysts** within their communities, creating new, independent ideas around community development and urban agriculture. The CRGs established during the project now host their own activities and events that provide community building, networking, and educational opportunities to their communities. For example, after attending gardening education and leadership training as part of the PS project, the leaders of the Wayside CRG expanded their membership and activities to include over 80 members and multiple events every season, including yoga in the garden, expert speakers on horticultural topics, and a community jazz fest held at the garden.

#### Internal expansion

Gateway Greening is also expanding its work to new communities. In 2012, the organization received a \$450,000 five-year grant from MFH to **expand garden development and education to St. Louis County**, home to over one million people. The project will establish gardens at public library locations throughout the county using the CRG model. Gateway Greening staff will provide leadership training and garden management education, as well as planting resources (e.g., seeds, garden beds). The expansion project has begun plans for two initial library gardens but already has more applications and requests for gardens than it can currently support. In concert with the expansion effort to the county, Gateway Greening will **double the capacity of its tremendously popular horticultural and leadership education class, *Growing Gardeners***, to 60 attendees in two sessions, one in the county and one in the City of St. Louis.

Gateway Greening also continues efforts to build awareness around food policy issues, both locally and statewide. The organization has begun hosting a monthly "Food Policy Brown Bag" series which it hopes will **heighten awareness of food policy issues in St. Louis**. The organization plans to expand its annual Community Garden Summit of local community garden leaders to a larger statewide audience and is currently pursuing funding for this expansion.



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*"Libraries already provide a center for community development and activity. The addition of a community garden space in North St. Louis County will build upon the libraries contributions and allow neighbors to come together, grow fresh food and carry on the rich tradition of gardening."*

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For more information about the *Growing St. Louis, Cultivating Health* project, please contact:

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