



TOOLKIT

Engaging Stakeholders

MISSOURI FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH

Healthy Schools Healthy Communities

LET'S BUILD A HEALTHIER FUTURE

*In 2013, Missouri Foundation for Health established the **Healthy Schools Healthy Communities (HSHC)** initiative to address childhood obesity in select areas. HSHC brought together schools, community organizations, businesses, parents, and other residents to identify and advocate for changes that increase access to healthy food and physical activity where our kids live, learn, and play. This toolkit was originally developed as part of the initiative and has been adapted for statewide use.*

Updated July 2021

Tips to Connect

As you continue to grow healthy eating and active living efforts in your community, don't forget to lean on important stakeholders to support your work! Health care professionals, faith leaders, local businesses, and social clubs can help you further your reach. They are trusted voices who engage with community members you may not be reaching through your traditional channels.



“My councilwoman sees the significance of Healthy Schools Healthy Communities, and she loves it. She’s helped me connect with different elected officials and nonprofits, like the Urban League the Boys and Girls Club. I’ve been making these great relationships, and they’re supportive of everything I’m trying to do to partner and work together.”

Phedra N., St. Louis, MO

1. Find a Personal Connection

Engagement efforts are most successful when you, or someone in your committee, has a personal connection to your potential partner. This can be as simple as reaching out to a favorite doctor, a pastor, or a local business owner. **Everyone has a role to play!**

2. Do Your Research

Be prepared before you reach out to your contact. Learn more about the organization - about their members, programming, events, etc. Take the time to think through creative ideas of how they can get involved.

3. Make Contact

Once the initial connection is made, try to meet face-to-face or follow up with a phone call to discuss your efforts and how this partner can get involved. Be prepared to talk about the overall initiative and your role.

4. Send a Letter or Email

If you can't find a personal connection, send a letter or email describing your work and how this partner can get involved. Remember to check with everyone in your network first for any personal connections!

If you are sending a letter, check out the template on the next page.

Sample Outreach Letter



Dear [Name],

I am writing to invite you to support our efforts to build a healthier future in [Community]. Over the last year, we have [local improvements such as building a walking trail, or installing water bottle filling stations, etc. - refer to your action plans for examples to use] and we are currently developing plans for improving school and community environments for the year ahead. Plans for next year include [local example such as introducing healthier foods in schools, or improving parks and sidewalks].

We are inviting [organization name] to join us in this important effort and be a part of the change in [Community]. We would like to ask you to consider [ideas of how you would like them to get involved, such as hosting or speaking at an event, volunteering, or promoting events to customers/members].

With your support, we are confident that we can help more [Community] children and families. By participating, [list benefits to organization, such as reinforces position as community leader, provides opportunity for positive media exposure, offers community service opportunities, etc.].

I will be contacting you in the next few days to discuss the vital role you can play in our efforts. In the meantime, feel free to contact me at [phone number and/or email] with any questions.

Sincerely,

[Name]



Health Professionals

When it comes to health and wellness, health professionals are trusted voices in your community. Whether it's a doctor, pharmacist, or school nurse, health care professionals are experts on the issue.

Ways to Engage

Ask health professionals in your community to:

- Encourage their patients to eat healthy and get active
- Serve as a spokesperson at an event or provide a quote for a press release
- Join your collaboration
- Encourage other health care professionals to get involved

Make it Easy to Engage

Provide talking points to encourage health professionals to talk with their patients about the importance of leading a healthy life. These are busy people, so the easier you make it for them to get involved, the better!

- Like so much of the work you do, we empower communities to build a healthier future for children and families across Missouri.
- We've brought together schools, community organizations, businesses, parents, and residents here in [Community] to increase access to healthy food and physical activity where our kids live, learn, and play. Together, we've made changes like [give examples: adding salad bars to our school cafeterias, building safer sidewalks, hosting an annual 5k for the community, etc.]
- As a [health care provider type], I know the people in our community trust you and look to you for guidance when it comes to their health and well-being.
- There are many ways we can work together to help [Community] stay healthy. From providing a list of places where residents can get active or find healthy food, to sharing a list of fun and healthy events for kids and families - I'd love to tell you more about our work.
- I know you and your staff are very busy! We want to make it easy for you to get involved. Do you have a few minutes to talk more about our work and how you can be a part of the change?

Don't be afraid to ask questions! This is the start of the conversation.

Faith Leaders

Faith leaders are often respected members of your community and looked up to by their congregations. With a regular, captive audience and a vested interest in improving the wellbeing of their members, faith leaders can be of great value to your efforts.

Don't underestimate the powerful impact of word of mouth. Places of worship are also often the center of many members' social lives and a trusted channel through which to receive information.

Ways to Engage

Take advantage of their existing programming to incorporate your messages, including:

- Serving healthy meals at functions
- Putting healthy recipes in bulletins
- Including physical activity in youth group meetings
- Discussing the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle during sermons, scripture discussions, or children's classes (for example: 1 Corinthians 6:15-20)
- Asking to use their facilities for physical activities, particularly in winter months when indoor space is needed



“We started doing classes in the library, and the most people we ever had was 12. Then we moved to a church and used their fellowship hall. Then we moved to the cafeteria at the school. Now we’re at the Armory Building with this big gym and there are about 35 women and one man. We needed the space and people kept giving us the buildings to use.”

Patricia C., Caruthersville, MO

Spotlight: Shared Space

A community organization reached out to local facilities to see if they were willing to let kids in their community use their indoor spaces during the winter months for exercise. Check out the letter!

Sample Outreach Letter



Dear [organization name],

I am writing to invite you to support our efforts to build a healthier future in [Community]. Together with [partner names], we are working to make it easier for kids to get active and eat healthy in the community.

Our work brings together schools, community organizations, child care providers, businesses, parents, and residents to identify and increase access to healthy food and physical activity where our kids live, learn, and play. Together, we're creating healthier school and community environments that can help our kids grow up at a healthy weight and live longer, healthier lives. And we hope you can join us in our efforts.

We are reaching out to you as an organization with a space that families and kids could use to play in during the winter months. As the weather gets colder, kids are often left with few choices and limited access to places where they can get adequate exercise during the winter months. Research says that children need 60 minutes of play every day to grow up at a healthy weight.

We would like to invite you or another member of your organization to a meeting on [date of meeting] at [location of meeting] to further discuss how we might be able to work with you, and how your facility could potentially be used to keep our community's kids active all year long.

It's going to take all of us, working together, to help our children and families in [Community] grow up healthy and strong. With your support, we are confident we can continue to create these opportunities. Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

[Name]



Local Businesses

As active and influential members of the community with wide social circles, local business leaders can quickly spread the word about your efforts. After a business is on board—whether by promoting an upcoming event or joining your committee—submit a press release about the partnership.

A partnership is a great way to generate new business while increasing awareness of your work!

Ways to Engage

Ask local businesses to get involved by:

- Sponsoring an event - allow them to distribute their own materials!
- Donating time or money
- Posting signage in their store windows
- Spreading your healthy messages to their networks over social media
- Becoming a committee member

Find ways to recognize their support. Consider sending your local newspaper, radio stations, or television stations a press release with information about your partnership.

Sample Press Release

[Your Organization] Partners with [Business name] in [Community]

[Subheading describing details of partnership]

[Community], MO (Month Date, Year) - Today, [local business] became the latest community partner to join [your organization] efforts to help children grow up at a healthy weight. [Business] joins [other partners] in the initiative, which aims to increase access to healthy food and physical activity in [Community].

[Your organization] is creating healthy opportunities for kids in the classroom, on the playground, at home, and throughout the community. Recent changes include [details of environmental changes/new learning opportunities in schools and community].

“We are excited to announce that [business] will be joining our efforts,” said [first and last name]. [Business] will be [specifics of what the partnership entails].

[Your organization] encourages participation from across the community. [Local businesses, faith organizations, child care providers] and others have signed on in support of the effort and are working to spread the word about new opportunities for children and families.

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Clubs/Organizations

Look for organizations in your community that have an interest in the health of children and families and come prepared with ideas on how your efforts can be incorporated into an organization's ongoing activities. Leaders of these organizations likely have expertise in networking, fundraising, event planning, or community outreach that would be of great value to your collaboration.

Ways to Engage

Reach out to local clubs or social organizations such as:

- Youth organizations: Bring ideas on how they can incorporate your efforts into their activities
- Rotary Clubs or Lions Clubs: See if anyone is interested in joining your collaboration, use the letter below as a template
- Sports leagues: Ask coaches to talk to their teams about the importance of healthy eating or send home flyers to parents

Sample Letter

Dear [Name],

I am writing to invite you to join efforts to build a healthier future in [Community]. [Your organization] along with [partners], is working to make it easier for kids to get active and eat healthy in our community. We're bringing together schools, community organizations, child care providers, businesses, parents, and residents to work toward changes that increase access to healthy food and physical activity where our kids live, learn, and play.

Over the last year, we have [local improvements such as building a walking trail, convening school cafeteria workers to improve healthy lunch options, etc.]. We have exciting plans in the coming months, including [local example such as introducing healthier foods in schools, improving parks and sidewalks].

Of course, our efforts are made stronger by the individuals and organizations who join with us. I would like to invite [organization name] to join our team, a group of organizations and individuals in our community who contribute valuable ideas and help raise awareness of these efforts. We meet once a month to discuss plans underway, share feedback, and brainstorm ways to increase engagement and support. It's going to take all of us, working together, to bring change to [Community]. With your support, we are confident we can create healthier opportunities for our children and families.

I will be contacting you in the next few days to discuss the important role you can play in our efforts. In the meantime, feel free to contact me at [phone number and/or email] with any questions. Again, we hope you can join us, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

[Name]