

Promoting Active Communities

Pilot Data FY2018 – Evaluation Narrative

Initiative Goals

The Promoting Active Communities (PAC) assessment is being updated to provide a tool that organizations implementing SNAP-Ed at the local level can use to assess community-based physical activity supports and track policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes. It will equip community partners with data to understand what evidence-based or practice-tested PSE strategies can be used to improve physical activity supports in their community.

- A. MFF will work with at least 5 MFF SNAP-Ed grantees to pilot all PAC modules in eligible communities.
- B. MFF will enhance PAC capacity-building resources and technical assistance approaches to inform action steps that communities can take to make PSE changes that support physical activity.

Evaluation Design

Data Collection

MFF is piloting each of the updated PAC modules by training program leads to facilitate the use of the updated PAC in their communities. MFF subrecipients, contractors, and their local community partners use the assessment results to put community-based PSE strategies into action and increase a supportive environment for routine physical activity. These community teams are testing the PAC modules and providing user feedback on the technology, technical assistance, and capacity-building components of the modules, as well as the use of the community feedback report that will help them plan and make changes. MFF is refining the PAC according to the community-based input.

MFF completed initial testing of the Core Module and Parks and Recreation Module with five partners. This testing was done on paper versions of the modules before programming the modules as online, interactive tools.

MFF interviewed key SNAP-Ed staff at each subrecipient and contractor organization to gather feedback on their:

- Approach to completing the modules, including information on the community teams that were engaged;
- Experience completing the modules, including challenges and successes; and
- Perceptions of and use of the module feedback and action planning tools.

MFF also conducted email surveys with each local program's community partners. The email survey gathered feedback on items such as their engagement in module completion, challenges and successes, additional resources that would have been helpful, and community work that has resulted from completing the modules.

In FY 2018, MFF provided training on the newly developed online tools for the partners who would be using them. This including technical assistance on general steps to engage a community team to complete the PAC, as well as specific information on how to navigate the modules and features online. In addition to the training, packaged instructions were also provided.

Results

Local SNAP-Ed program leads identified the communities where they currently work and/or have a history of working and leveraged those existing relationships for this pilot; they facilitated the completion of the Core and Parks and Recreation Modules with engagement of community team members such as recreation department employees, health department employees, planners, and elected officials, generally by either convening a group or joining an existing coalition of community leaders. Meetings with the group or individual community leaders were held to complete and then share the results of the module assessments and audits and to identify which action items would be prioritized. The PAC was used to guide conversations regarding community opportunities and supports for physical activity and the use the best practice feedback to inform next steps.

Fifteen of the thirty individuals (50%) who received the email survey responded. There was representation from each pilot community. Regarding the Parks and Recreation Module specifically, most of the survey respondents (80%) were part of the team that gathered information for one or more sections of the Parks and Recreation Module, with about two-thirds (64%) feeling that there were clearly defined roles for what was needed from them. The majority of respondents (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that completing the Parks and Recreation Assessment was worthwhile for their community. Additionally, the majority felt that the PAC process brought about an increased awareness regarding physical activity opportunities in their community and that their community was better positioned to implement changes to improve physical activity.

Pilot feedback was incorporated into the Core and Parks and Recreation Modules as the modules were made into online, interactive tools. MFF then began testing the online Core and Parks and Recreation Modules, as well as a paper version of the developed Schools Module, with a group of seven subrecipients. This round of testing was in progress at the end of September 2018. The feedback gathering process will continue into FY 2019, with timing of feedback based on local program progress through the modules.

Also, the testing and user feedback process identified opportunities to enhance the capacity-building resources that had been developed, such as the module community feedback reports, action planning tools, and technical assistance approaches. This includes enhancements to make navigating the online resources easier and providing additional language to set expectations for performance on community feedback reports. Implementation of additional enhancements is planned for FY 2019.

Conclusions

The pilot of the updated Promoting Active Communities (PAC) assessment demonstrated its value as a tool for engaging local SNAP-Ed partners and community stakeholders in identifying and planning for physical activity-supportive policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes. Feedback from pilot communities highlighted increased awareness of local physical activity opportunities and stronger readiness for community-level improvements. Insights gathered during testing informed refinements to both the PAC modules and accompanying capacity-building resources, with continued improvements planned to enhance usability and effectiveness in FY 2019.