



Community Involvement in the Design of Community Health Equity Reports

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Objective: This project utilized the input of community teams in cities and counties participating in the “Place Matters” initiative to develop tailored community health equity reports targeting local policies.

Methods: Researchers worked with partner teams—local health departments, faith-based organizations, and other civic leaders—in eight communities to shape the report to address local concerns and priorities. Specifically, the community teams were directly engaged in defining goals for the report; domains and indicators of interest; key questions, the analytic plan, and valid geocoded data sources; and relevant prior research in the community. The process, which facilitated this community engagement, will be described.

Results: The teams sought to use the reports to persuade elected officials to improve access to food, quality of public education, and access to health care. Domains of interest included environmental justice, institutional racism, the built environment, and violence. Health outcomes of interest included life expectancy, asthma and obesity. The specific indicators selected by the communities to measure geographic disparities in social determinants of health, and the lessons learned from the dialogue, will be presented.

Conclusions: Nine different communities with varied interests were able to collaborate with researchers to tailor studies to local priorities in order to create leverage to facilitate policy change. The advantages and challenges of engaging community input as a first step in such research will be reviewed.

Partners: The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies – Health Policy Institute (HPI), Virginia Commonwealth University Center on Human Needs (CHN), The Virginia Network for Geospatial Health Research (VaNGHR), Common Health Action (CHA), Place Matters Community Team

Phases for CHER	Community Team Involvement	Lessons Learned
1. Selecting Teams to Participate in the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted a letter of interest to be included in the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varying levels of preparedness among teams complicated subsequent stages in report production
2. Communicating Steps, Timelines, Expectations and Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarified project expectations and timelines in an iterative process with the researchers Provided input on how the CHER fit in with their other projects and policy initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upfront discussion with all of the project collaborators to clarify expectations, roles and deliverables was necessary Timelines and schedules were critical in managing the complexity of the project. However, flexibility was required to adapt to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing schedules of individual teams Data complications that emerged
3. Developing a Research Plan Background Research Identifying Data Defining Questions Selecting Methods Feedback from Advisory Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified indicators and local data sources Determined the topic of interest that reflected community priorities and how the CHER could add value to their current capabilities and facilitate policy discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting geospatial and statistical methods that would be both rigorous and accessible to general audiences was complex Some communities required guidance in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing a research topic Moving from general topics of interest to more focused questions
4. Acquiring and Evaluating Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided a range of local data sets that would otherwise have been unavailable Directed researchers to other potentially available data sets. e.g. datasets at local universities Provided explanation of outliers Assisted in the selection of geographic units to be censored. e.g. small population, non-residential areas, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data for small geographic areas introduced multiple challenges. e.g. outliers, small sample sizes, missing data, etc. The data sources provided by communities varied in thoroughness and supporting documentation Data sharing agreements required negotiation and flexibility
5. Defining Community Boundaries and Landmarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established the communities’ geographic boundaries Suggested landmarks (e.g. rivers, minor road ways, topographical features) Approved community specific map templates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community feedback was crucial to identify important local landmarks Delineating community boundaries was essential to conducting appropriate analysis Community and neighborhood names may be contested or inconsistent
6. Data Analysis a) Non-spatial b) Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested types of analysis Provided guidance on data issues Corroborated that results made intuitive sense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community variability in data quality (e.g. unit of analysis) affected the power available for statistical analysis In general, communities lacked individual level data, which created analytical limitations
7. Report Production a) Technical Report b) Final Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritized presentation of content and policy recommendations Provided community context in the narrative Provided feedback on interpretability of report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early planning was necessary for dealing with limited findings or lack of statistically significant relationships Scientifically sound data and findings are important to support policy recommendations The local context of data is extremely important in interpreting results.
8. Rollout (HPI & CHA)	Determined appropriate audience	Pending

Place Matters Teams

Despite being referenced in online shape files, the community team for San Joaquin reported that this lake in Kings County no longer exists. Without community feedback, it would have been mapped incorrectly.

Community	Area of Interest
Alameda County	Criminal Justice, Economics, Housing, Transportation, Education and Physical Environment
City of Baltimore	Education and Neighborhood Quality
Bernalillo County	Environmental Justice
City of Boston	Social Capital
Cook County	Food Access
Orleans Parish	Education and Crime
San Joaquin Valley (8 Counties)	Social Factors, Access to Care, Environmental Hazards & Avoidable Hospitalizations
South Delta (2 Counties)	Green Space