



# Enlarging the Role of Community Partnerships for Health in Appalachian Tennessee

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Tennessee's prevalence of obesity, cancer and cardiovascular deaths, high infant mortality, diabetes incidence, and tobacco use degraded the quality of life and economic stability of the state. The Roadmap for a Healthier Appalachian Tennessee program of the Tennessee Institute of Public Health was designed to support the work of local community partners and leaders (e.g., city and county economic developers, public health professionals, business leaders, school personnel, non-profit and faith-based organizers) to implement or expand community-based health initiatives in identified economically distressed or at-risk Appalachian counties of Tennessee in 2014.

The competitive subgranting process included an invitational grant preparation workshop, site visits, telephone assistance, and periodic emailed communication with updates on additional grant opportunities, current research, and articles of support for the targeted topics chosen by the communities. The broad goals of the program allowed 20 communities to tailor diverse community health improvement projects to fit health needs in their local areas to achieve self-determined objectives and to choose measures that relied on state, national and local data.

This systematic approach drove verifiable changes in local health practices and policies and strengthened community ties with East Tennessee State University, as well as promoted healthy behaviors that were linked from the start to improving the economic base for these counties. Evaluation by the communities of their completed projects contributed to the assessment of their long term success and sustainability.

## PREMISE

Community small grant programs can encourage multi-sector collaboration and innovative strategies leading to health promotion and prevention strategies; healthy habits to meet serious health challenges; community groups forming lasting partnerships; linkages between health, economic development and education; and improvement in health factors and economic outcomes.



## Linking health, education and economic development

- ### LESSONS LEARNED
- > Counties were eager to make their activity plans work and all involved more partners than they originally planned.
  - > Many of counties used this opportunity to attract additional funds or to step into more fiscal responsible roles.
  - > Most projects continued after the end of the grant period. The County Health Rankings can be a benchmark for impressions of health improvements when supplemented with state and local data sources.
  - > Grantees used the additional information provided for funding sources, data, and supporting studies.
  - > Media visibility was important. Grantees had or established websites or Facebook pages to promote their activities.
  - > Photographs of events and activities show the degree of passion and interest generated by the projects.

## PROJECTS

County	Project #/Recipient	Project
Campbell County	East TN Children's Hospital	Heart Health Education
Carter County	Boy & Girls Club of Elizabethton/Carter County	Healthy Habits
Cocke County	Cocke County Partnership	Better Nutrition for Children
Greene County	Rural Resources, Inc. & Town of Greenville	Workforce Wellness
Grundy County #1	Grundy County Health Council	Healthy Lifestyle Habits
Grundy County #2	BeerSheba Springs Medical Clinic	Multi-sector Initiative to Target Obesity
Grundy County #3	Grundy County Schools	Greenhouse/ School -community garden
Hancock County	Hancock County Arts	Summer/Nutrition, Health and Dance
Jefferson County	Boys and Girls Club of Dumplin Valley	Community Outreach Program for youth
Johnson County	Johnson County Economic and Community Development	Community Harvest Dinner
Madison County	Madison County Schools	Helping Pains Healing Hearts
Marion County	Monroe County Health Council	Hiking and Running Clubs for youth
Putnam County #1	Cookeville Chamber of Commerce	NAS Prevention Media Campaign
Putnam County #2	Putnam County Schools	PCEEE Health Fair-- Birth, Books & Beyond
Scott County #1	Mountain Peoples' Health Council, Inc.	Scott County RAAW healthier eating education
Scott County #2	Children's Center of the Cumberland	Multi-sector Mental Health Collaborative
Smith County	Smith County Drug Prevention Coalition	Workforce Substance Abuse
Union County #1	Joint Economic Development Board of Union County	Active Living Initiative
Union County #2	Union County Anti Drug Coalition	Risky Behaviors Education
Union County	Union County Chamber of Commerce	Promoting Healthy Lifestyles & BlueWays

- ### OUTCOMES
- > All grantees involved new local partners for health and reported progress toward achievement of chosen goals.
  - > Total participation in county strategies: over 3,000 individuals.
  - > Project topics summary: 8 fitness and nutrition, 3 community gardening and nutrition, 3 education and workforce preparedness, 3 substance abuse, 1 community forum, 1 direct medical access, and 1 emergency preparedness.

## CONCLUSIONS

Requiring communities to forge links between health and economic outcomes, involving health and economic development partners, and giving the community organization greater autonomy in choosing strategies and measures based on local conditions produced benefits that will reach beyond the grant period. Local control and local direction was integral to success.

This grant project defined a sustainable and scalable approach for improving the quality of health in select Appalachian counties and defining the relationship between health and economic benefit in these Tennessee counties. By moving health and economic relationships up front, supported by easily accessible data provided through the County Health Rankings and by keeping lines of communication open with the counties, these 20 projects made lasting progress toward creating more healthful communities.

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