Community Level Action for Population-wide Impact:
An Overview of Community Efforts to Increase Healthy Eating and Active Living Opportunities
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Background
In the United States, chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes, are among the leading causes of death and disability. They account for 70% of all deaths in the U.S. or 1.7 million deaths each year. Additionally, the economic, social, and physical conditions in the places where people live, work, and play have a major influence on health outcomes. Since 2011, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched four nationally funded, locally implemented programs that were built on previous community health programs. The programs focus on increasing healthy eating and physical activity population-wide. Although the programs differ slightly by program model, they similarly focus on developing policy, system, and environmental improvements at the community level.

- Community Transformation Grants (CTG) (2011 - 2014): The purpose of the initiative was to build capacity to implement evidence-based policies to prevent chronic diseases and promote health.
- Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) (2014 - present): A three-year initiative that supports implementation of evidence-based strategies to improve the health of communities and reduce the prevalence of chronic disease.

Intervention Strategies

Key Findings and Common Themes
Partnerships and Collaboration
- Voicet for Priority Populations: Awardees were encouraged to implement interventions that address priority populations specific to their communities.
- Policies and System Changes: Awardees incorporated representatives of the community to ensure the interventions were appropriate, feasible, and needed to implement in the community.
- Decision Maker Involvement: Awardees included decision makers to employ strategies that impacted policy implementation in organizations, schools, and worksites.
- Non-traditional Partnerships: In the planning process, awardees considered the importance of including representatives from multiple sectors to ensure that the interventions were comprehensive and inclusive of entities that were not traditionally included.

- Capacity Building: Partners received additional training specific to their respective strategies. Awardees had access to technical assistance providers to enhance program planning and implementation.
- Time: Building and maintaining partnerships requires a significant investment of time and resources to ensure that the organization and the community are included in the process. Time is required to ensure that all invested parties are integral to improving health outcomes and that it has an impact.

Schools
- Implementation: Fifty percent (50%) implement interventions to increase access to healthy food options and physical activity opportunities.
- Joint-Use: Over 14% implement policy to enable students to access school grounds to promote physical activity after school hours in addition to community members.
- Formalized Comprehensive Physical Activity: Twenty percent (20%) increase physical activity opportunities through formalized efforts such as curriculums or time dedicated to being physically active during class.

Community
- Fieldwork Planning: The analysis concluded that 14% of the awardees utilized community planning as an intervention, which included community design, policy implementation, improvements, and/or recommendations.
- Built Environment: Thirty-five percent (35%) of awardees applied improvements to the built environment as potential strategies that would increase physical activity. Some communities collaborated with partners to make structural improvements to parks/trails signage. Some awards used strategies in the park as safety (police visibility, lighting and walking running groups).
- Retail Environment: Over 28% employed changes in retail environments to increase healthy eating by community members. Examples include infrastructure improvements and collaborating with grocery stores to offer healthy eating items.

Conclusions and Future Implications
Our analysis outlines the importance of supporting communities to create population-wide strategies that increase access to healthy food options and physical activity opportunities. The findings from this analysis may serve to improve health outcomes in other areas. There is no single strategy to improve community health. However, including health in policies that create or support systems and environments broadens public health’s reach within communities. This may decrease long-term chronic disease health outcomes and improve population health overall.

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Methods and Results
The internal Performance Monitoring Database was used to analyze awardee data including community action plans and interim and annual progress reports. There are 175 awardees that focus their efforts on healthy eating and/or physical activity. Forty were included in this analysis. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the selected awardees were governmental agencies followed by community-based organizations (21%). Federally Qualified Health Centers or hospitals (14%) and non-governmental agencies (7%).