



STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AND MAKING CONNECTIONS THROUGH EVALUATION

The Greensboro Downtown Greenway's Journey

The [Greensboro Downtown Greenway](#) is a multi-use, walking and biking trail encircling the center city of Greensboro, North Carolina. It serves as a connector for businesses, universities, and neighborhoods. The Downtown Greenway was built for several reasons, including encouraging economic development, enhancing transportation, and promoting fitness, connectedness, and well-being in the community. As of fall 2022, three miles of the Downtown Greenway are complete, with the final mile expected to be completed in 2024.

The Downtown Greenway continues to expand its cross-sector collaboration by engaging new partners and implementing activities to assess community-level injury and violence prevention (IVP) outcomes as outlined in their evaluation plan.

NAVIGATING THE PROCESS

Safe States' [Strengthening Partnerships between Business and Public Health: A Roadmap for Advancing Community Injury and Violence Prevention](#) (Roadmap) was created in 2020 to help foster partnerships between the public health and business sectors to advance IVP efforts at the community level. To showcase the translation of the best practices included in the Roadmap and its prequel, [Preparing to Partner](#), into real-world settings, Safe States provided seed grant funding to community partnerships in 2020 and 2021.



Increasing cross collaboration in the community requires intentionality. The **"CONNECT"** section includes the why, the how, and the what to help business and public health professional partnerships consider when to engage with the other. By creating mechanisms to increase cross-sector collaboration and using trusted "gate-keepers", new partners are attracted and connected to the work, while also re-engaging existing partners.

The **"EVALUATE"** section of the Roadmap highlights the importance of including measurement and evaluation as a priority across multi-sector collaborative work. It emphasizes the need to think logically and strategically about evaluation, creating a measurement plan that includes measures of interest to both health and business partners.

KEY PARTNERS



Chamber of Commerce



City Government



Congressional Nurses



Faith-based Organizations



Public Health



Non-Profits



University

The Downtown Greenway built on their recently developed [evaluation plan](#) to begin data collection and measurement. The partners also expanded their collaborative network to include additional organizations, such as healthcare, government, public health, and universities. Applying the recommendations from the "[Connect](#)" section, the Downtown Greenway partners made intentional efforts to collaborate with the Cone Health Congregational Nurse Initiative to integrate the use of the Downtown Greenway into their program to promote wellness, chronic disease management, and healthier lifestyles among the diverse populations they serve.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Share Vision and Goals to Increase Cross-sector Collaboration

Conversations are key to increasing cross-sector collaboration. Connecting with new agencies can require flexibility as the partnership develops. Goals of a program or initiative can mature or transform over time. Having regular discussions about vision and goals for each organization and/or business can support a successful collaboration. Seek out the gatekeepers within the organization you hope to connect. Agencies or businesses can create open lines of communication by scheduling regular meetings to ensure all needs are being met.



Support Assessment of Public Health Metrics and Measurement of IVP Outcomes

Programmatic and stakeholder goals may not be related to public health metrics or typical IVP outcomes valued by funders. By assessing a wide range of outcomes and metrics, the diverse evaluation needs of funders and stakeholders can be met and enriched. Focusing measurement on the shared risk and protective factors of IVP can improve an evaluation's design to satisfy the diverse data needs.



Monitor Indicators

A collaborative approach to evaluation encourages shared decision-making to develop a functional evaluation and measurement plan. Programmatic goals and goals valued by stakeholders in communities transform over time. It is important to have open communication to address both initial and evolving indicators as they arise. Evaluation coaching and increasing the capacity of organizations to monitor indicators is necessary to sustain evaluation activities.



Active Listening and Creative Thinking are Essential Skills

To identify opportunities for collaboration, both parties must participate in active listening. Listening to partners goals and needs while determining how they align with your organization can move a partnership forward. When engaging with partners, there may be times when unplanned or unanticipated opportunities arise. The creative thinking process can be used to determine how these emergent opportunities can advance your project or goals.



The process of data collection and evaluation created new connections with community members and stakeholders by highlighting the benefits of the Greenway beyond economic development. More than 90 percent of those interviewed believe the Greenway is improving shared risk and protective factors of IVP, including mental health, connection and commitment to school, connection to community, and family support and connectedness. The increased awareness and perceived value of the Greenway across a wide range of stakeholders continues to grow as a result of intentional efforts to strengthen partnerships.



“ Although efforts to establish and strengthen relationships may not yield immediate results, these efforts over time improve the capacity of the organization to collaborate with future partners and generate unexpected opportunities for partnerships between business and public health.

Muhsin Michael Orsini
Independent Consultant

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Connecting partners and evaluating activities is cyclic. Evaluations can lead to identification of programmatic gaps and barriers, as well as areas of opportunities. Connections to new partners can arise while exploring identified opportunities. There is greater impact when the Roadmap sections are not used in isolation but are seen as a continual cycle of improvement, leading to long term sustainable benefits.

Health Equity Considerations

Downtown Greenway partners increased efforts to strengthen relationships with various organizations committed to social justice, health equity, and those serving at-risk populations. Some examples include organizations serving uninsured and low-income populations, victims of violence and abuse, and immigrants and refugees. Downtown Greenway partners also worked to ensure that the public health intern was representative of the diverse community where they would serve. Partners actively recruited at a Historically Black College and University and selected an intern from that school.



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