

# Health Equity in Prevention

## Policy, Systems, and Environmental Changes

In 2013, the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross) awarded contracts to 13 organizations throughout the state, all working to improve health outcomes and advance health equity through policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change.

The primary goal for this collective work, the Health Equity in Prevention (HEiP) initiative, is to build power among health equity organizations to influence how Minnesota's communities support health for all. To accomplish this, Blue Cross is working to support organizations' efforts to implement PSE changes; strengthen the leadership, capacity and resilience of organizations; and increase connections among organizations to promote health equity.



## What are PSE changes?

The health of a community is influenced by social norms and shaped by policies and decisions that impact the physical landscape, availability of resources, and economic vitality of neighborhoods. When these community conditions do not support the health of residents, policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes can be used to make sustainable changes that make it easier for people make healthier choices.



### Policy

**50+** changes adopted or implemented

**Policies such as laws, ordinances, regulations, or rules influence the choices that people make in their daily lives.** They are written statements of a position, decision, or course of action. Policies can be formal, such as a state law banning smoking in buildings, or informal, such as an organizational policy to provide healthy snacks at meetings.



### Environmental

**26+** changes adopted or implemented

**Environmental changes are changes to the physical, economic, or social environment.** Examples of environmental changes include building new bike trails, cross-walks, community gardens, or placing fresh fruits and vegetables near the front of local corner stores. Environmental changes increase opportunities for healthy behavior within a community.



### Systems

**10+** changes adopted or implemented

**Systems changes impact health behavior by shifting culture and norms and affect all elements of an organization, institution, or system,** such as a school district, transportation system, or workplace. Systems changes are often the culmination of a number of efforts that, together, shift how an entity operates.

Together, the 11 organizations that received funding throughout the full 5-year HEiP initiative contributed to the adoption or implementation of multiple PSE changes.

# PSE Change Categories

Over the past five years, the HEiP organizations implemented policies that will improve health by reducing exposure to secondhand smoke and youth access to commercial tobacco products; increasing access to affordable, healthy foods and supporting urban agriculture; creating spaces that make it easy for residents to safely bike; and promoting equity and inclusion across multiple types of policies.

This summary illustrates actions these organizations have taken to improve health and advance health equity.

## Tobacco

NorthPoint worked with multi-unit housing complexes in North Minneapolis to pass and implement 10 smoke-free grounds policies.

Rainbow Health Initiative worked with GLBT in Recovery and North Suburban Chorus to adopt non-tobacco sponsorship policies.

Rainbow Health Initiative worked with Clare Housing to pass and implement smoke-free policies in its two residential properties.

CLUES worked with multi-unit housing complexes, restaurants, churches, schools, child care establishments, and other businesses to pass a total of 73 tobacco-free policies.

NorthPoint and their youth coalition, Breathe Free North, successfully advocated for the passage of a Minneapolis city ordinance restricting the sale of flavored tobacco products to adult-only tobacco retailers.

AICAF provided assistance to the Prairie Island Indian community in drafting, presenting, and passing the Prairie Island Indian Community Healthier Environment Tobacco policy.



## Food Access

The Open Door has worked to increase the number of garden plots available to low-income households in Eagan from 69 to a total of 141 plots.

Fair Food Access has helped to create a new community garden in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Duluth.

Appetite for Change has advocated for a change to the Minneapolis Community Garden, Market Garden, and Urban Farm Policy which now allows for extended lease terms on some city-owned parcels and opens leasing or purchasing of city-owned parcels to commercial growers and community gardeners.

Hope Community, Inc. has worked with community members to advocate for the passage of the Staple Food Ordinance which established minimum healthy food stocking requirements for businesses with food licenses.

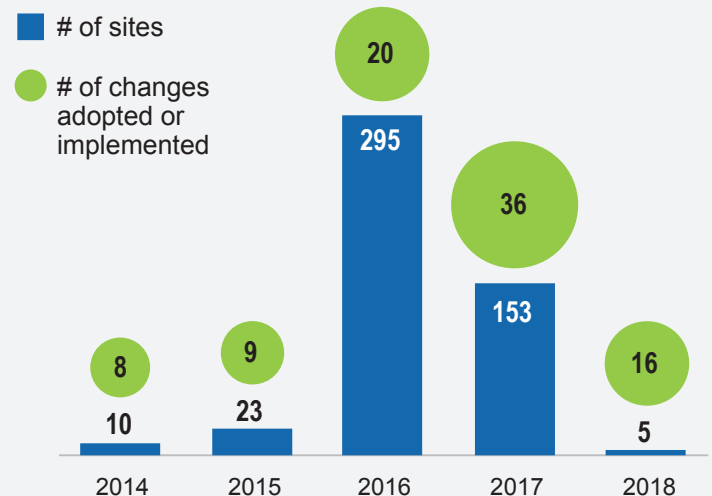
NorthPoint worked with four major vending machine companies in Minneapolis to adopt policies that specify half of the snacks and beverages in vending machines be healthy options.



Early in the initiatives, the organizations invested time and resources into building their own capacity and engaging community residents in their planning work. As a result, the number of PSE changes that were adopted or implemented was smaller in the first two years of the initiative, compared to the final three years.

Some PSE changes were implemented in multiple locations, increasing the reach and impact of the HEiP initiative. For example, a number of organizations implemented a similar policy (e.g., healthy vending machine policies) in multiple organizations or implemented an environmental change (e.g., community garden plots) in multiple neighborhoods.

### Number of PSE changes and sites



# Active Living

CLUES has worked with businesses, schools, and churches owned and/or patronized by Latino residents to adopt a total of 14 bike rack policies and 7 active living policies.

Hennepin County has implemented demonstration projects along the planned Bottineau light rail transit route showing possible ways to make walking and biking more accessible, including a temporary bike rack, crosswalk improvements, bike repair stations, and a shared use bicycle/pedestrian crossway.

The station area plans developed for each planned Bottineau light rail transit stop consider connections to transit for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motor vehicle drivers.



# Equity and inclusion

Rainbow Health Initiative worked with the YWCA in Minneapolis and the YMCA in St. Paul to install gender neutral bathrooms and changing areas.

AICAF developed the Tribal Health Equity report through a series of conversations with American Indian community members focused on identifying cultural norms and common beliefs around tribal health equity, wellness, positive change, cancer prevention, and tobacco control.

Rainbow Health Initiatives worked with partner organizations to have a gender identity and expression question added to the Minnesota Student Survey.

Waite House led advocacy efforts in partnership with other organizations to ban the use of glyphosate (a pesticide used in Round-Up and similar products), in Minneapolis Parks.

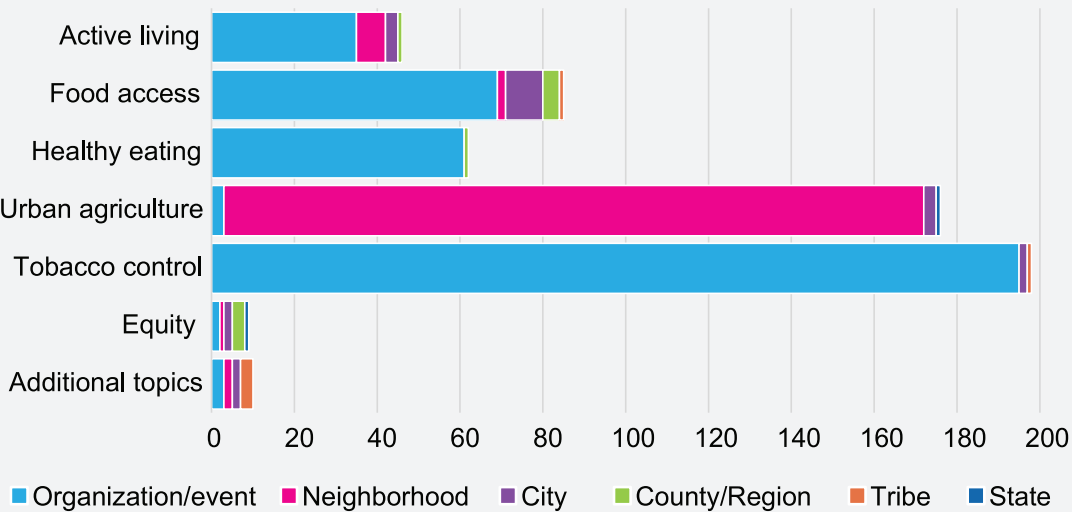
Waite House and Hope Community, Inc. worked together to get the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to include racial equity language in the Urban Agriculture Action Plan.

Cycles for Change has developed an Equity Scorecard to use in shaping equitable bike policy.



PSE changes can be implemented and have impact at multiple levels. Through the HEiP initiative, PSE changes to improve health were adopted or implemented in 386 organizations or events. New community garden plots accounted for most of the changes that occurred at a neighborhood level. Most of the city-level PSE changes were implemented in Minneapolis or Duluth, home to a number of HEiP-funded organizations.

Types of PSE changes passed and total number of locations impacted



## Other Metrics

### How are PSE changes different than programs, events, or other activities?

Not all efforts to improve the health of people in a community are PSE changes. Organizations also put considerable effort into engaging their community and developing adult and youth leadership skills. These efforts can play an important role in building knowledge and social connections among community members and influencing health behavior, but are often less sustainable and impact fewer people than PSE changes.

### Organizational partners

Initiatives to improve community health can't be done by any single organization; they require strong partnerships. HEiP organizations have identified over 300 partners who have helped them expand their work and create PSE changes in their communities. These partners range from individuals to organizations and include representation from government, education, the private and non-profit sectors, and beyond.

### Community leadership development

#### Examples of HEiP organizations focused on community resident leadership development

Appetite for Change	<b>Provided training for 9 growers</b>
Hope Community Inc.	<b>2 residents hold seats on the City of Minneapolis' Stable Food Ordinance implementation committee</b>
Cycles for Change	<b>35 residents participate on the organization's Equity Council</b>
Fair Food Access	<b>18 residents were trained as canvassers to engage residents in shaping improvement's to Duluth's food system</b>

#### Examples of HEiP organizations focused on supporting youth leadership

Cycles for Change	<b>300 youth participate in the annual Youth Bicycle Summit</b>
NorthPoint	<b>124 attended and participated in youth-led sessions about strategies to reduce flavored tobacco sales in North Minneapolis</b>
NorthPoint	<b>66 youth participated in Breath Free North, a youth anti-tobacco group</b>
Waite House	<b>67 youth grow food at Peaceful Grounds, the organization's onsite garden</b>

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