

Waite House

Partnerships are critical to advancing health equity and working to achieve policy, system, and environmental (PSE) changes. In 2013, Waite House, a non-profit organization through Pillsbury United Communities that integrates civic engagement with human service programs, received funding from the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota to implement policy, systems, and environmental changes to advance health equity in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis. Waite House's PSE change efforts through this initiative have focused on healthy food access, active living, and urban farming. This summary describes how Waite House has leveraged its organizational partnerships over the past four years to expand opportunities for health in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis.

NETWORK DESCRIPTION AND ITS IMPACTS

Waite House currently engages 57 individual and organizational partners in its efforts to improve food access, increase opportunities for physical activity, and expand urban farming. This network, which includes representatives from government, private, and nonprofit sectors, has nearly doubled in size since Waite House began its HEiP-funded work in 2013. The network, structured as multiple coalitions and workgroups, has achieved a number of accomplishments during the past three years:

- **The Healthy Food Access Coalition has worked to increase access to healthy foods by advocating for changes in local food shelf and food bank policies, as well as food policies in their own organizations.** In the first year of its work, the coalition provided a training to local organizations on creating healthy food policies, and coalition members drafted healthy food policies for their respective organizations to include food shared as a part of programs or at meetings. The coalition has also engaged in broader policy change efforts. As a result of advocacy efforts, Second Harvest Heartland adopted a policy in 2015 to allow sharing or re-distribution of fresh produce, reducing waste and increasing access to fruits and vegetables at smaller food shelves and meal programs. More recent efforts have focused on creating a healthy food pledge for food shelves, and the creation of an infographic showing the history of hunger relief programs in Minnesota as a communication tool in their PSE change efforts.
- **The Fitness Coalition has worked to improve neighborhood safety and increase Phillips residents' access to and involvement in physical activity.** In 2014, the coalition hosted informal "backyard meetings" and Circulos Comunitarios (Community Circles) to discuss neighborhood safety. Topics included how to notify the city about neighborhood concerns, such as broken street lights, and request repairs. The coalition also provided funding to nine projects to increase opportunities for under-engaged community members to access fitness activities, including a native women's lacrosse tournament, self-defense/martial arts for young women, and a bicycle advocacy group for residents. The group also worked with Hope Community and other organizations to successfully advocate for the inclusion of racial equity in the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board's 2014 Urban Agriculture Plan. In 2016, the Fitness Coalition disbanded, in part because of staff transitions and Waite House's increasing focus on healthy food access and urban agriculture.
- **The 24th Street Urban Farm Coalition has used multiple strategies to increase access to urban agriculture in the Phillips neighborhood.** In its first two years, the coalition established two gardens, the Mashkiikii Gitigan (Medicine Garden) and the Infinity Garden, and engaged over 300 residents in planting, tending, harvesting, distributing, marketing, and preserving healthy foods grown in these spaces. The coalition's efforts contributed to changes in City of Minneapolis policies that ultimately turned 50 vacant lots into community gardens, including six lots in the Phillips neighborhood. The coalition also worked with Gardening Matters and other organizations to successfully advocate for a city policy allowing community seed libraries that give residents access to a variety of vegetable and flower seeds and to develop draft language for property managers to use in leases to support gardens on rental properties.

- **Waite House continues to be involved in new and emerging efforts to improve health in the Phillips neighborhood.** The Gardens and Urban Farms Task Force, convened by Waite House in 2015, has taken on several PSE change efforts in its first two years. The task force successfully advocated for changes to City of Minneapolis policies related leasing land for community gardens, and the group's efforts contributed to the Minneapolis Park Board's decision to end the use of glyphosate, an herbicide that may cause cancer, in neighborhood parks. The task force has also pushed for stormwater management fee credits for urban agriculture. In addition, the group brought together over 50 residents and 10 organizations for a series of policy-writing workshops with State Representative Karen Clark. The task force drafted a revised version of the Urban Agriculture Pilot Program Bill, which would fund urban agriculture projects statewide, with at least 50 percent of funding supporting projects in communities of color. The bill was passed in spring 2017. Waite House currently participates in a steering committee with four other organizations to establish a "green zone" in the Phillips neighborhood, a place-based approach to building environmental, economic, and health equity. In 2017, Waite House convened a food security work group, in partnership with several local food shelves, to develop policies and practices to increase food security among food shelf users.

LESSONS LEARNED

Strong individual relationships, common organizational goals, and momentum built on early accomplishments has helped Waite House to grow and nurture a strong organizational network. All but 3 of the 24 organizations Waite House initially engaged through their coalition model continue to be involved in efforts to improve health in the Phillips neighborhood. Over a four-year span, Waite House has maintained or strengthened their relationships with most of these organizations and brought 25 additional organizations into their network.

Working together on specific projects has been an effective strategy for building and strengthening partnerships. Staff noted their initial strategy for building partnerships was to bring people together once a month through their three coalitions, but as their work evolved, they began to build partnerships more organically by taking on specific projects and initiatives together. Staff reflected that this approach has increased their collective capacity to advance systems changes. However, Waite House has also engaged partners through educational programs and train-the-trainer events, internships, one-time events, an e-newsletter, and other campaigns. Staff also emphasized the importance of transparency and consistency in maintaining strong partnerships.

Organizational commitment to a network-based approach can help build internal capacity for developing strong partnerships. Although paid staff time has been helpful in providing the internal capacity to build partnerships, staff emphasized that the organization's broader philosophy of a network-based approach to their PSE change work has helped them optimize the resources needed to build these relationships. Staff commented that this approach has been especially impactful in their gardening work, and noted that the Phillips neighborhood has the strongest network of community gardens and associated organizations in the city.

Staff see opportunities to continue to expand and strengthen their network of partners, especially with food shelves and in their broader systems change efforts. Waite House staff remarked that they have the right partners involved in their current work, but see opportunities to involve new partners in future work. In the last year of the initiative, Waite House is also interested in connecting with organizations to explore how to influence individual behavior change once PSE changes have been established.

WAITE HOUSE'S NETWORK OF PARTNERS

Organizational relationships can be thought of along a continuum. As organizations work more closely together, they develop more formal relationships, align their values, create shared ownership, and share common processes. To be effective in their work, organizations need relationships in place at all levels.

Waite House completed a network mapping exercise in early 2014 near the beginning of the HEiP initiative. This network map shows the partnerships that are still in place ("existing partners") as well as new partnerships that Waite House has established since then ("new partners since 2014"). Waite House also rated the strength of their relationship with each partner (collaborative, coordinating, or cooperative), described below.

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Collaborative partners work together closely to accomplish specific long-term goals. They are likely to share resources and decision-making authority and work together to determine roles and responsibilities for key tasks. Often, collaborative partners develop a shared mission to guide their common work.

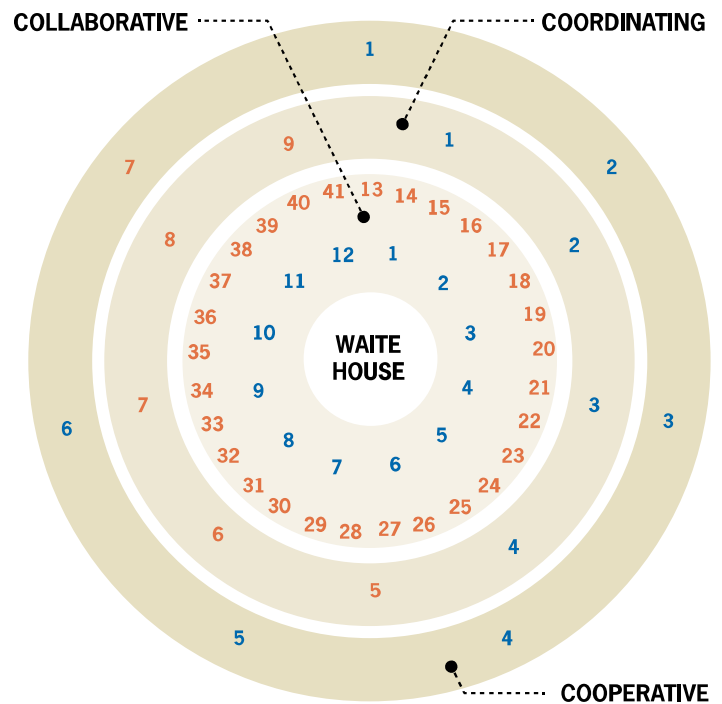
Waite House has collaborative relationships with 41 partners:

Existing partners

1. Indian Health Board of Minneapolis¹
2. Vida Sana through Children's Minnesota¹
3. Women's Environmental Institute¹
4. Hope Community¹
5. Minneapolis Healthy Food Shelf Network¹
6. Minneapolis Parks and Recreation³
7. Open Arms¹
8. Ventura Village Neighborhood Association¹
9. The Food Group¹
10. Holy Rosary Church¹
11. Metro Food Access Network¹
12. Native American Community Clinic¹

New partners since 2014

13. Community gardens⁴
14. Gardening Matters¹
15. Little Earth of United Tribes¹
16. Land Stewardship Project
17. Brian Coyle Community Center¹
18. University of Minnesota Extension – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed)¹
19. University of Minnesota Extension – Master Gardener program¹
20. Native Essentials²
21. Afro-Eco¹
22. Permaculture Research Institute – Cold Climate¹
23. Homegrown Minneapolis³
24. Mashkiikii Gitigan¹
25. Dream of Wild Health¹
26. University of MN – College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences¹
27. Andersen Community School³
28. Public Allies¹
29. Higher Education Consortium of Urban Affairs (HECUA)¹



30. Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)¹
31. Nexus Community Partners¹
32. Isuroon¹
33. The SEED Partners³
34. City of Minneapolis Neighborhood and Community Relations³
35. Soccer leagues⁴
36. Voices for Racial Justice¹
37. City Councilmember Alondra Cano³
38. State House of Representatives member Karen Clark³
39. United Way¹
40. Second Harvest Heartland¹
41. UNO Branding²

COORDINATING RELATIONSHIPS

Although there are strong relationships in place, coordinating partners tend to work more independently from one another to make decisions and accomplish project tasks. Coordinating partners often have aligned goals, but do not work to develop a shared mission to guide their common work.

Waite House has coordinating relationships with 9 partners:

Existing

1. City of Minneapolis Health Department³
2. Midtown Greenway Coalition¹
3. Loaves and Fishes¹
4. Messiah Church¹

New partners since 2014

5. Stone's Throw Farms²
6. Bii Di Gain Dash Anwebi¹
7. Native American Community Development Institute¹
8. Augsburg²
9. Growing Lots Urban Farm¹

COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Cooperative partners work together less frequently on specific common interests and goals, or to maximize resources, such as training. They are unlikely to share financial resources and decision-making authority.

Waite House has cooperative relationships with 7 partners:

Existing

1. Cycles for Change⁵
2. Division of Indian Work¹
3. Community Emergency Services¹
4. Neighborhood Associations¹
5. Tamales y Bicicletas¹
6. Urban Ventures¹

New partners since 2014

7. Youth Farm¹

The partners represented the following types of sectors:

1=Nonprofit organizations

2=For-profit organizations

3=Decision-making bodies (e.g., city councils)

4=Key stakeholder group or individual (e.g., community/resident groups)

5=HEIP-funded organizations