

Showcasing Successes

A Template For Success Stories

NOTE: This fill-in-the-blank form is designed to lead you through the steps required to create change. Its purpose is to enable you to document heart-healthy policy and environmental changes that have occurred in your State to reduce risk factors for heart disease and stroke. As a template for your success stories, it includes examples of heart disease and stroke prevention programs and provides examples of how a community assessed the need for them, set goals and objectives, addressed challenges, and then created the programs. You can show this document to decision-makers and policymakers to demonstrate the possibilities that exist for such change. These successes, however large or small, can be at the community, city, or State level. If your State needs to borrow successes from another State, that is okay. Just identify the State whose successes you are illustrating, and note your intention to reproduce those successes in your State with the help of the decision-maker and/or policymaker.

A (name of State) Success Story

(Insert name of State) has had a number of successes in providing opportunities for its residents to prevent heart disease and stroke. Following is a story of how (name of community) succeeded in reducing the risk factors for heart disease and stroke among (adults, teens, and/or schoolchildren). We begin with the situation that called for such action. As you review this document, notice the obstacles the community faced and how it overcame them.

Need/Situation (Explain the need or situation that was the catalyst for action.)

Example: Seventy-five percent of the State's adults, ages 18 to 54, reported that they did not exercise. Among the reasons given were that they had no access to facilities in which to exercise in the evening and they didn't feel the streets in their neighborhoods were safe enough to take evening walks or jogs. Therefore, they just stayed home and watched television.

Goals/Objectives (State your goals/objectives to fill the above need.)

Example: To open school gyms during evenings to accommodate adults who want to exercise.

Example: To make (insert number) of the State's most dangerous communities safe for evening walks and jogs by implementing neighborhood watches, increasing street lighting, and eradicating graffiti and structures that promote crime.

Obstacles (Describe the obstacles your State faced in accomplishing this goal.)

Example: School boards feared school properties would be misused and left unclean by evening users and therefore would not be suitable for use by children during school hours.

Example: No one had done this before, and the project looked overwhelming.

Plan (Describe your plan to accomplish your goals.)

Example for Goal #1: The State needed to allay the school board's fears by showing board members evidence (reports, etc.) that this had worked in other States/communities and benefitted residents. We needed a plan to ensure that the school gyms would not be misused and would be clean for student use the next day.

Example for Goal #2: The State needed to enlist the support of the National Crime Prevention Council, the American Institute of Architects, community and business leaders, and volunteers to accomplish the task before us. We needed to document the crime in the communities we selected and survey the communities' residents to determine whether they would walk and exercise more during the evening if their streets were made safer. We also needed to show that these goals had been accomplished in other communities with great success. Then we would publicize the results of these findings and our plan of action. This, we hoped, would generate community and corporate support of our plan.

Action (Explain your course of action to achieve your goal. Did it differ from your original plan? If so, describe how.)

Example Action for Goal #1: We worked with some of the schools to move the janitors' afternoon cleanup responsibilities from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. to a later hour (9 p.m. to 10 p.m.). Or we enlisted volunteers (Monday through Friday night) to monitor the facilities and ensure that they were appropriate for use by students the next day. We had adults and teens sign a document on arrival indicating they had read and understood the rules of gym use which included that if they misused the facilities, their gym privileges would be revoked.

Example Action for Goal #2: We teamed with the National Crime Prevention Council, which sent us a staff member and volunteers from its "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" program. We also enlisted the support of volunteers, community and business leaders, the electric company, and (*insert number*) high school principals in (*insert number*) communities in (*insert number*) counties (name them). Students at (*insert number*) high schools painted over the graffiti during the course of two weekends. The electric company installed street lights in these communities at no charge. The American Institute of Architects sent volunteer architects to redesign landscapes to beautify the communities and eradicate structures that promote crime. Business leaders footed the bills for these efforts. Communities enrolled residents to monitor their communities through neighborhood watches on Monday through Sunday nights. We encouraged and got the media—local, State, and national—to do a series of stories on the progress of this plan and, later, on the outcome. We held an awards ceremony to honor the volunteers and community and business leaders who supported our efforts, and we invited the media to attend. We won additional media attention.

Evaluation Plan (Describe how you evaluated the outcome of your actions.)

Example for Goal #1: We asked evening visitors to fill out monthly surveys to determine use of the facilities and the benefits they enjoyed, such as increased energy, weight loss, and increased physical activity as compared with previous months and years.

Example for Goal #2: After all of the work to “clean up the communities and make them safe,” we surveyed residents to determine whether this work had any bearing on their physical activity, whether it had increased or stayed the same, and if it had increased, how it benefitted them.

Results (Describe the outcome of your actions and the benefits to your audiences.)

Example—Results for Goal #1: We tallied and analyzed our monthly surveys and sent quarterly reports to the school boards. Our findings were that *(insert number)* school gyms in *(insert number)* counties (name them) were used monthly by an average of *(insert number)* people *(insert number)* days a week. Then we published our findings, including testimonials of gym users and positive remarks by school board members (to give them credit and good exposure). We distributed our findings, along with a news release, to the local media and followed up with calls. The media response was overwhelming, with coverage in the State’s *(insert number)* newspapers and more than *(insert number)* radio stations and *(insert number)* affiliates of the three networks.

Example—Results for Goal #2: Physical activity among residents in these *(insert number)* communities jumped *(insert number)* percent with benefits, such as weight loss, increased energy, and increased feeling of well-being reported. *(Cite specific statistics regarding these outcomes.)* *(Insert number)* radio stations, *(insert number)* network affiliates, and every major daily paper in the State covered the plan’s progress and outcome. *(Insert number)* ethnic publications and *(insert number)* ethnic radio stations also reported on the progress and results of the plan.