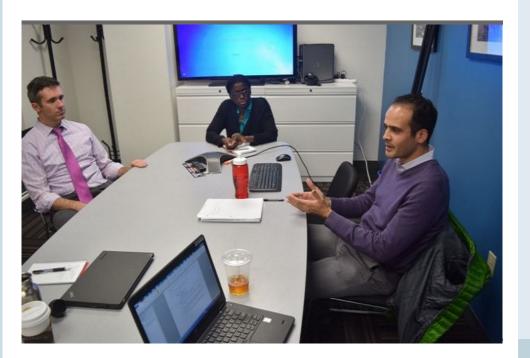
# Plan4Health: Inner Core Community Health Improvement Coalition Metro Boston, MA

## **SUMMARY**

Plan4Health connects communities across the country, funding work at the intersection of planning and public health. Anchored by American Planning Association (APA) Chapters and American Public Health Association (APHA) Affiliates, Plan4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions. The Inner Core Community Health Improvement Coalition (ICCHIC) unites seven municipal coalitions to address unhealthy diets within Boston's Inner Core region by improving access to healthy food. ICCHIC seeks to strengthen distribution networks, support healthy retail initiatives and work with grocery stores to offer and promote healthy foods.



## **CHALLENGE**

Though Cambridge, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Wakefield, and Somerville in the Inner Core Community Health Improvement Coalition (ICCHIC) are within 20 miles of Boston, they function as regional urban centers in their own right, providing nearly 200,000 jobs and housing 384,000 residents in a set of communities rich with racial and ethnic diversity. Like many urban settings, these seven cities grapple with chronic disease burdens and risk factors disproportionately

concentrated in highly segregated low-income, minority, and immigrant areas. With less than 35 percent of the population eating the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, all seven municipalities struggle with chronic diseases related to poor nutrition. One in 14 adults is diabetic and obesity is highly prevalent across the seven communities.

#### YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

ICCHIC works with communities across metropolitan Boston. Reach out to the coalition's lead agency, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, to learn more. If you're not in the Boston area, consider reaching out to your local planning commission. To learn more about ICCHIC and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the project website (www. plan4health.us). Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following #plan4health.

"Our region has seen more and more corner stores becoming healthy corner stores by changing their offerings and how they promote these foods. With this effort, we are collaborating with our coalitions and their healthy neighborhood corner stores to have a reliable and efficient way to keep healthy, affordable foods in stock."

- Barry Keppard, AICP Public Health Manager Metropolitan Area Planning Council

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## SOLUTION

ICCHIC is connecting the seven regional cities to share experiences, lessons learned, and strategies with the overall goal to improve the healthy food supply chain in Metro Boston - and replicate the model across the region. The coalition aims to provide residents consistent access to healthy food. By addressing gaps in the distribution system to make it easier for smaller stores to offer healthy foods, the Plan4Health project will increase the number of stores that offer and promote healthy foods. Changing the store environments by making healthy options more prominent and ensuring that prices stay reasonable will make healthy choices easier for residents.

## **RESULTS**

An established convener, ICCHIC is continuing to build community-based partnerships, to learn from coalitions across the region, and to strengthen the connections between the inner core cities. During the initial project period, ICCHIC has identified key informants to strengthen the coalition's understanding and approach to changing store environments. Recognizing that many residents are dependent on what is available in walking distance, it is all the more vital that corner and grocery stores in the Inner Core offer healthy options, but also important that stores meet the needs and requests of community members. Imposing change from the outside without a sense of community priorities will undermine the long-term goals of the project, making relationship building and project buy-in during this first phase essential to overall project success.

## **SUSTAINING SUCCESS**

Within the Plan4Health project period, the healthy food supply chain goals serve as a pilot project for the broader region. The coalition's lead convener, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, connects the cities in this initiative as well as communities throughout the greater Boston area. Experiences from store owners, residents, and project stakeholders will inform next steps not only for the Inner Core, but also for the region. As best practices are identified, the project will promote models for change, sharing key messages to increase the understanding of policy, systems, and environmental changes as well as the success stories happening in Boston's own backyard.

Plan4Health is made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the CDC or imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Learn more about Plan4Health and the National Implementation and Dissemination for Chronic Disease Prevention project at www.cdc.gov/communityhealth.

