

# Plan4Health: State-Level Impact

"It was great to see how quickly people began to connect the dots as to how planners and public health professionals could collaborate. By the end of the meeting the group had developed a lengthy list of potential next steps from cross-pollination of conferences to resource sharing to 'take your planner to work' day. Within a few days of the meeting, one of the APA-IA board members reached out to me to identify a local public health person to be interviewed by consultants working on a master plan for her community. Success!"

*Jeneane Moody*  
IPHA Executive Director

Plan4Health resources are open to all APA and APHA members – and we want to hear more about what you need to integrate planning and public health where you live, work, and play. To learn more about our national partnership and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the project website: [www.plan4health.us](http://www.plan4health.us) and contribute to the Peer Learning Network. Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following #plan4health.

## Success Stories



## 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.

Coalitions work with communities to increase access to healthy food or increase opportunities for active living where residents live, work, and play. The Plan4Health project aims to build local capacity to address population health goals and promote the inclusion of health in non-traditional sectors.

## CHALLENGE

Chronic diseases account for more than two-thirds of deaths in the United States and prior to death, have a significant negative impact on quality of life and productivity for sufferers. Race, socioeconomic status, and other social disadvantages are associated with high rates of chronic disease (CDC 2013). By increasing opportunities for people to engage in healthy behaviors, chronic diseases and their impacts can be diminished.

Planning in the United States originated with a public health purpose. To address issues that resulted from rapid urbanization, federal, state, and local governments created a series of policies related to zoning, housing, and transportation. These policies have had lasting impacts on the ways we develop the built environment often resulting in unanticipated, detrimental health effects. Through an ecological model of health, we know that health outcomes are shaped by more than individual behaviors and clinical care.

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

## SOLUTION

Just as Plan4Health's coalitions are anchored by APA chapters and APHA affiliates, APA's Planning and Community Health Center is partnering with APHA at the national level. This key partnership ensures coalitions are supported throughout the project period – and that conversations and lessons learned at the local level are part of the national agenda to prevent chronic diseases.

APA and APHA have supported 35 coalitions through training and technical assistance. Funding local coalitions has resulted in breaking down siloes between the planning and public health professions in communities across the country. Allowing the time and space to create and to maintain relationships across sectors is a key piece to moving towards a culture of health.

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## RESULTS

In Linn County, Iowa, the statewide effort and partnership building have been a key feature of the coalition's work. The coalition was been very strategic about connecting Plan4Health to existing efforts and supporting the true integration between planning and public health. In the fall of 2015, the coalition convened a joint board meeting between the Iowa Public Health Association and the American Planning Association Iowa Chapter. Through discussions during the meeting, the boards were able to see the extent of connection between IPHA and APA's Iowa Chapter. Both groups expressed the value-add of taking the time to meet and identify opportunities for collectively impacting health in Iowa. Such cross-collaboration has enabled Planning Healthy Iowa Communities to further policy, systems, and environment changes in the community.

The Trenton Healthy Communities Initiative developed a Health and Food System Element (HFSE) as one component of the city's new Master Plan. Throughout the drafting the HFSE, the coalition partnered closely with the City of Trenton, Rutgers University, the Trenton City Department of Health and Human Services, the Trenton Health Team, and various non-profit and community-based organizations. During the New Jersey American Planning Association annual conference in January 2016, the coalition provided a "how to" for planners and public health professionals to begin incorporating health into plans across New Jersey.

## SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

Partners at the national and local levels have allowed Plan4Health to be successful. Plan4Health will maintain a sense of urgency and excitement with partners through the Peer Learning Network (PLN). Launched in January 2016, the PLN is an online forum to unite professionals, community members, organizations, and peer experts involved in the healthy communities movement. The network is currently centered on Plan4Health coalitions to provide a platform to maintain connections with coalitions and to foster cross-cohort learning. Featuring mini-webinars, videos, and podcasts, the PLN provides an opportunity for Plan4Health sub-recipients to share their experiences directly with each other. Instead of connecting through an intermediary, community members hear the voices and see the faces of their colleagues.

By capturing the experiences of the coalitions, the project will continue to inform the national agenda for chronic disease prevention and to contribute to the evidence-base of effective interventions, ensuring we are able to support communities' efforts to create healthy, vibrant homes.

Plan4Health is made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The views expressed in this success story 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 of Chronic Disease Prevention project at [www.cdc.gov/communityhealth](http://www.cdc.gov/communityhealth).