Selecting Strategies to Create Change[[1]](#footnote-1)

# What is a strategy?

A strategy describes how you are going to get things done. It tries to broadly answer the question, "How do we get there from here?" (Do we want to take the train? Fly? Walk?)

# Part 1: Types of Strategies

Your coalition will likely use more than one strategy to impact your contributing factors and prioritized issues. Using as many different types as possible will create a more comprehensive strategic plan, increasing your chances of achieving community‐level change. The strategies overlap and reinforce each other.

1. Providing Information/Communication. Educational presentations, workshops or seminars or other presentations of information designed to increase knowledge in order to influence and empower individuals to make healthier choices (e.g., public announcements, social marketing and media campaigns, brochures, dissemination, billboards, community meetings, forums, web-based communication).

2. Enhancing Skills. Workshops, seminars or other activities designed to increase *the skills* of participants. Strategies that enhance skills usually involve the focus population directly interacting with a facilitator as the facilitator delivers a standardized or set curriculum. The materials should be culturally appropriate and tailored to the audience. These types of strategies usually require a trained facilitator.

3. Providing Support. Supporting people to participate in positive activities that address problems. For example, if a community finds that many youth are cited for underage drinking during certain hours, helping the youth take advantage of substance-free activities during those times is considered providing support.

4. Enhancing Access/Reducing Barriers. Increasing the ease, ability, and opportunity to use beneficial services such as healthcare or childcare. For example, offering healthcare in many languages increases access for those who do not speak English. This can also be “flipped” to *reducing access/increasing barriers*. For example, laws that bar youth from drinking decrease their access to alcohol.

5. Changing Consequences (Incentives/Disincentives). Changing the consequences for engaging in certain behaviors. For example, if a local business alerts law enforcement that youth under 21 years old are using fake IDs to buy alcohol, your coalition can recognize the business publicly. Or if a student does well in school, the coalition can award them with gift certificates. On the flip side, if a student is found vaping at school, the school can require attendance at a program to help them quit.

6. Changing Physical Design/Making Environmental Changes. Changing the physical design of the environment to encourage positive behaviors and discourage negative behaviors. For example, cutting back or eliminating foliage that provides cover for drug sales, increasing lighting at crime hot spots, and cleaning up abandoned properties that are used for drug use. Strategies might also focus on improving physical design to increase use, such as increasing accessibility by installing sidewalks and signs that promote use of walking and biking paths.

7. Modifying/Changing/Developing Policies. Formal change in written procedures, by-laws, proclamations, rules, or laws with written documentation and/or voting procedures. Policy change can take place at the municipal level, state level, within school districts, law enforcement, or other agencies, or private businesses. For example, healthy workplace initiatives, law enforcement procedures and practices, taxation, regulatory oversight, public policy actions, etc.

# Part 2: Selecting Strategies

A good strategy will:

* Fit the coalition’s resources and opportunities. A good strategy takes advantage of current resources, such as a tradition of community pride. It also embraces new opportunities, such as an emerging public concern for neighborhood safety. A good strategy is also feasible for the coalition to implement: Do you have enough money? Enough time? Enough knowledge? Enough authority? If not, are there partners you could engage with who have these resources? If not, it may not be the right strategy for you now. For example, if you are considering implementing a class on healthy coping strategies, does the coalition have the money to purchase the program? Do you have members qualified or interested in being trained to deliver the program? Or can you take advantage of an existing class and ask the providers to offer it in your community?
* Minimize resistance and barriers. What obstacles or resistance would make it difficult to implement the strategy? How can the coalition minimize or get around them? Depending on what you’re trying to accomplish, some resistance from community members or organizations might be expected. However, strategies need not provide a reason for opponents to attack the initiative. Good strategies attract allies and deter opponents.
* Reach those affected*.* Strategies must connect to your focus population.
* Impact the identified contributing factor(s). If the aim is to reduce a problem such as unemployment, is the strategy enough to make a difference on rates of employment, either on its own or as part of a comprehensive plan? When possible, use evidenced-based strategies that have been shown through research to work. Avoid strategies have been shown NOT to work.

**Overall, the coalition should focus on selecting strategies that are practical given the coalition’s resources and timeline, shown to be effective, are consistent with the coalition’s mission and, taken together, form a comprehensive approach to impacting the contributing factors leading to the issues in your community.**

# Part 3: Researching Strategies

The following are ideas for brainstorming strategies as well as online sources for specific types of strategies.

## Do you want to reduce an existing problem or try to prevent a problem before it starts?

As you think about strategies, consider how you want to approach the issue. For example, if you’re trying to reduce teen vaping, you might consider gearing some of your strategies to younger children who are not yet exposed to e-cigarettes. Or, to promote academic success, you may choose to work with younger children who still have full potential for learning and school success.

## What has the coalition already been doing?

Look at the activities the coalition is currently doing. Do any address your prioritized contributing factor or can they be modified to address them? Can you build upon them?

## Where are there gaps in resources?

Consider where there are gaps in existing resources. Sometimes there aren’t any existing resources that directly address your prioritized contributing factors, or the existing resources are not enough to fully address the contributing factor. How could you fill the gaps? How could you enhance or extend the reach of existing resources? Types of gaps include:

* *Demographic gaps:* Services may not be available in a developmentally appropriate manner for all ages, or in a culturally appropriate manner for members of diverse communities.
* *Geographic gaps:* Services may not be available throughout the defined community. They may be available within an urban community but not in a less densely populated rural area.
* *Service delivery/program gaps:* Needed services or programs may not be available in the community. For example, responsible beverage server training may be needed, but there may not be anybody qualified to teach the classes.
* *Resource gaps:* There may not be sufficient materials to reach all populations. For example, a school district may have qualified life skills instructors, but may not have funding for the workbooks and other class materials.
* *Laws and enforcement gaps:* These gaps exist when the current laws and/or ability to enforce the laws is not available in a community. For example, in rural communities where only one or two law enforcement personnel are on duty, the officers may not be able to patrol all the locations of underage drinking parties.

## Look to online resources for ideas.

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| The following table provides online resources with lists of strategies. | |
| Source | **Types of Strategies/Information** |
| [Community Toolbox Chapter 23](https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/access-barriers-opportunities) | Additional information on and examples of modifying access, barriers and opportunities to services, products, practices, amenities, information and institutions. Examples of specific strategies are provided, including extending opportunities to the economically disadvantaged, increasing access for people with physical disabilities, and using outreach to increase access. |
| [Community Toolbox Chapter 24](https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/improving-services) | Additional information on developing and improving community services, including promoting coordination and collaboration among agencies and increasing access to health and community services. |
| [Community Toolbox Chapter 20](https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/provide-information-enhance-skills) | Examples of communication and enhancing skills, including helping parents practice prevention with their children, implementing a neighborhood watch, and establishing youth organizations. |
| [Community Toolbox Chapter 21](https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/enhancing-support) | Examples of enhancing support, incentives, and resources, including creating and facilitating peer support groups and developing a local time dollars program. |
| [Community Toolbox Chapter 25](https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/changing-policies) | Additional information on and examples of changing policies. Examples of specific strategies are provided, including using tax incentives, promoting community-friendly policies in business and government, changing policies in schools, modifying policies to enhance quality of services, and changing policies to increase funding for community health and development initiatives. |
| [Community Toolbox Chapter 26](https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/physical-social-environment) | Additional information on and examples of changing the physical and social environment. Examples include improving the quality and affordability of housing, ensuring access for people with disabilities, improving parks and other community facilities, creating good places for interaction, protecting environmental quality, establishing neighborhood beautification programs, and promoting neighborhood action. |
| [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/) | A comprehensive registry of youth focused evidenced-based and scalable interventionsthat prevent or reduce the likelihood of antisocial behavior and promote a health course of youth development and adult maturity. Search by program outcomes, target population, risk and protective factors, or program type/setting/continuum of intervention. |
| [Results First Clearinghouse](https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/data-visualizations/2015/results-first-clearinghouse-database) | The Results First Clearinghouse Database is an online resource that brings together information on the effectiveness of social policy programs from nine national clearinghouses. It uses a color-coded system to easily access and understand the evidence base for a variety of programs. |
| [The Community Guide](https://www.thecommunityguide.org/) | A collection of findings and recommendations from the Community Preventive Services Task Force. Search by topic (such as obesity, asthma, nutrition, mental health, alcohol use) to find what strategies have worked (and not worked) with which populations and settings, what they might cost, and what to expect for outcomes. |
| [Healthy People 2020](https://wayback.archive-it.org/5774/20220413175448/https:/www.healthypeople.gov/2020/tools-resources/Evidence-Based-Resources) | A database of evidenced-based resources and strategies searchable by Healthy People 2020 topic areas (such as sleep health, physical activity, social determinants of health, adolescent health, etc.) as well as by criteria such as age ranges, population group, intervention type, etc. Note this was archived as of April 2022 and is no longer updated. |
| [National Prevention Strategy](https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/disease-prevention-wellness-report.pdf) | A document outlining recommendations for addressing national prevention strategy priorities including: tobacco free living, preventing drug abuse and excessive alcohol use, healthy eating, active living, injury and violence free living, reproductive and sexual health, and mental and emotional well-being. |
| [CDC Prevention Status Reports](https://www.cdc.gov/psr/2013/index.html) | PSRs highlight the status of various public health policies and practices focused on: excessive alcohol use, food safety, motor vehicle injuries, healthcare-associated infections, prescription drug overdose, heart disease and stroke, teen pregnancy, HIV, tobacco use, and nutrition, physical activity, and obesity. |
| [CDC Health Topics](https://www.cdc.gov/health-topics.html#a) | CDC Health Topic pages (searchable for diseases and health conditions, healthy living, workplace safety, environmental health, injury, violence and safety, etc.) provide information including data and current understanding of causes, treatment, and prevention. This is a good overall “one stop shop” with links to additional resources. |
| [A Compendium of Proven Community-Based Prevention Programs](https://www.tfah.org/report-details/a-compendium-of-proven-community-based-prevention-programs/) | Produced by the Trust for America’s Health and New York Academy of Medicine, this resource highlights evidenced-based prevention programs for disease and injury prevention around: cardiovascular disease; stroke and diabetes; asthma; sexually transmitted infections; injury and violence; tobacco use; and alcohol use. |
| [Programs that Work](https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL145.html) | From the Promising Practices Network (PPN), this document contains the summaries of the Programs That Work section of the PPN website. |
| [Evidenced-Based Practices Resource Center](https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp) | The Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center provides communities, clinicians, policy-makers, and others with the information and tools to incorporate evidence-based practices into their communities or clinical settings. Filter by Target Audience for “Community Coalitions.” |

1. Compiled and adapted from the following sources: CADCA Primer Series – Community Assessment; University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development Community Toolbox; CADCA’s Beyond the Basics Series - The Coalition Impact: Environmental Prevention Strategies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)