

# Strengthening Partnerships to Improve Community Health

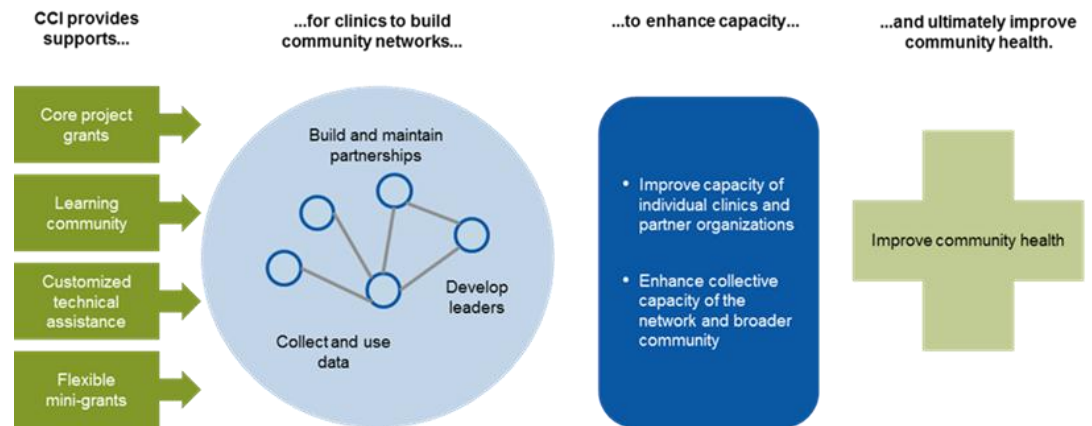
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*The Experience of CCI's Networking for Community Health Program*

## The Networking for Community Health Program

The Networking for Community Health (NCH) program was launched in 2008 by the Center for Care Innovations (CCI), formerly known as the Community Clinics Initiative. This four-year program was created to help California's community clinics go "beyond their four walls" to expand and strengthen their connections with traditional and non-traditional partners. By building community networks and enhancing the capacity of network members (e.g., clinic staff, representatives of other community agencies, residents), CCI aimed to ultimately improve community health.

CCI gave a variety of monetary and non-monetary supports to help clinics strengthen these community partnerships. In addition to approximately \$10 million in core grants to 39 community clinics, NCH provided a learning community for the clinics and their project partners, customized technical assistance and flexible mini-grants to address challenges or opportunities that arose during the projects.



## Focus of the NCH Projects & Their Approaches

The NCH grantees and their partners launched their projects by identifying salient health problems in their communities. These ranged from high rates of chronic illnesses (e.g., diabetes, obesity) and lack of affordable healthy food to difficulties accessing services among specific populations (e.g., transgender patients, immigrants). To tackle these complex multifaceted issues, grantees undertook multiple strategies.



Visit [www.careinnovations.org](http://www.careinnovations.org) to watch a series of videos about the NCH program and projects focused on engaging youth, creating community gardens and coordinating services.

***"We absolutely depend on partnerships. I think it's the future. You cannot thrive without partnerships or being collaborative."***

—NCH Clinic Grantee

### Percent of NCH Projects Engaged in Specific Strategies

|     |  |     |   |
|-----|--|-----|---|
| 93% | <b>Empowering community members</b><br>(e.g., recruiting community health promoters or volunteers, conducting leadership and skill-building trainings)   | 82% | <b>Providing health education or services</b><br>(e.g., offering expanded medical services, conducting health education workshops, producing educational materials) |
| 93% | <b>Connecting populations to services</b><br>(e.g., providing referrals to social or health service providers, producing materials to promote resources) | 70% | <b>Mobilizing the community for action</b><br>(e.g., organizing community members to testify at city council meetings, engaging in media and policy advocacy)       |
| 89% | <b>Collecting or utilizing data</b><br>(e.g., conducting community needs assessments, tracking project data, developing a shared data system)            | 54% | <b>Improving community infrastructure</b><br>(e.g., transforming unused land into community gardens, farmers markets, children's playground and walking paths)      |



## Building Capacity to Improve Community Health

### Developing Community Networks

**Clinic grantees and their partners developed and strengthened relationships with other organizations** (e.g., other health providers, youth development agencies, social service or advocacy organizations, city government agencies) and individuals to collaboratively address community health issues.

**Clinic grantees reported that their NCH project resulted in greater visibility and credibility of their clinic.** The project helped alter partner agencies' and community members' perceptions of the clinic as simply a medical provider, to an advocate for broader community health.

#### Perceptions of Significant Capacity Improvements Among Organizations\*




|  | Clinic Grantees | Partners |
|--|-----------------|----------|
|  New or stronger relationships to promote community health                         | 79%             | 81%      |
|  Greater visibility and credibility of the clinic as a center for community health | 78%             | N/A      |

### Enhancing Knowledge, Skills & Resources

Staff and community members involved in NCH projects built their capacity to promote community health by:

- **Developing new skills** (e.g., communication, presentation, data collection) to engage other community members and serve as leaders.
- **Gaining access to services or resources** through connections with project partners (e.g., expertise, tools, social services).
- **Becoming more knowledgeable** about specific health conditions (e.g., obesity), and the broader determinants of these conditions (e.g., access to healthy food).

#### Perceptions of Significant Capacity Improvements Among Community Members\*

|  | Clinic Grantees | Partners |
|--|-----------------|----------|
|  Leadership and skills to promote community health  | 65%             | 52%      |
|  Access to a wide range of community resources      | 63%             | 57%      |
|  Knowledge and awareness of community health issues | 63%             | 63%      |

### Creating Infrastructure Changes

**NCH projects have made progress toward improving the health of their communities.** For example, in some communities residents have greater access to affordable, healthy food through community and school gardens.

In other communities, individuals are receiving more coordinated care because agencies have established referral systems and on-site partnerships to care for groups of individuals (e.g., homeless patients, youth).

Other individuals are benefiting from policy advocacy successes that projects have achieved (e.g., removing exclusion criteria in a public medical insurance plan, holding the city attorney accountable for prosecuting negligent landlords).

***“We’re improving the housing stock in the city...enough that we’re seeing health improvements in a significant percentage of our patients.”***

—NCH Clinic Grantee

## Learn More About the NCH Program

To access the full report, “Strengthening Partnerships to Improve Community Health,” or the report briefs below that highlight different project strategies used to address community health issues, visit [www.careinnovations.org](http://www.careinnovations.org).



**Getting to the Roots of Healthy Living** examines NCH projects’ strategies (e.g., creating gardens, providing exercise classes) that hone in on the environmental and behavioral factors that contribute to poor health.



**Harnessing the Power of Youth** looks at the ways NCH projects involved youth in community health promotion efforts to build their knowledge and skills (e.g., public speaking, offering job experience) and empower them to navigate a more healthy and productive path toward adulthood.



**The Bridging Role of Community Health Promoters** explores how NCH projects engaged community health promoters (or *promotoras*) to leverage their connections with community members to improve health.



**The Power of Partnerships for Policy & Advocacy** describes how community clinic associations in the complementary Community Health Organizing Project worked with clinics to engage more diverse voices—both clinic staff and patients—in health policy discussions throughout the state.

\* These data refer to the percentage of clinic grantee and partners who reported “significant” improvements among groups involved in or served by the NCH projects.

Prepared by:



Prepared for:

