

HIDALGO Fit

An Active Living Plan for Hidalgo County

Presented by the HidalgO Fit Coalition and the Hidalgo County Health Department

ABSTRACT

A set of strategies designed to help Hidalgo County children, youth, adults and families to move, get active and get more out of life.



Mission

The mission of the Hidalgo County Active Living Plan is to create a framework that help to foster increased levels of physical activity amongst residents, by engaging private and public stakeholders and through systems change that also addresses public policy and environmental needs.

Vision

The vision of the Hidalgo County Active Living plan is to promote lifetime wellness and health opportunities for children, adults, and families, reduce the prevalence of chronic diseases and related complications in Hidalgo County, empower Hidalgo County employees and residents to commit to make healthy choices everyday, provide the tools and accessibility to incorporate healthy habits into daily routines, and create a culture of responsible health consumers in Hidalgo County.

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Executive Summary

The importance for residents of Hidalgo County to develop and maintain appropriate levels of physical activity throughout their lifespans cannot be overstated. The Hidalgo County Active Living Plan outlines a set of recommended strategies that can help to address this issue and ensure residents are able to enjoy increased opportunities for wellness and physical activity. The participating organizations which comprise the HidaLGO Fit Coalition, led by the Hidalgo County Health Department (HCHD), convened in 2018 to determine a set of strategies that align with and compliment strategies laid out by the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition and with Active Texas 2020, which delineate a clear set of objectives and actions to increase how much physical activity is undertaken by children, youth, adults, and seniors.

According to the Community Needs Assessment conducted by the University of Texas Health Science Center of Houston for the Region 5 of the State of Texas 1115 waiver, Hidalgo County continue residents continue to experience pronounced and seemingly intractable disparities when it comes to their health outcomes.

To determine what strategies are appropriate for increasing the physical activity of Hidalgo County residents, the HidaLGO Fit Council applied a process known as Results-Based Accountability (RBA), a framework particularly useful for coalition efforts where stakeholders leverage resources and align contributions to create greater impact as a collective. RBA works simultaneously at two distinct but interconnected levels - a whole population level, where work is focused on addressing outcomes for everyone in a broad geography, and at a program population level, where work is focused on improving the impact for clients served by organizations.

Introduction

The Hidalgo County Active Living Plan presents a set of strategies and actions that promote increased physical activity for youth, adults, and seniors in Hidalgo County. Regular physical activity helps to prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. The absence of physical activity creates increased risk for high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and Type 2 diabetes.

Hidalgo County has one of the highest rates for diabetes in Texas. Increasing levels of physical activity amongst Hidalgo County residents can lead to improvement not only for individuals but also for the county as a whole.

In Spring 2018, the Hidalgo County Health Department convened the Hidalgo Fit Council, a cross-sector of leadership from the region's health, education, non-profit, and business sectors. The purpose of the Hidalgo Fit Council is to support the development of the Hidalgo County Active Living Plan and its implementation.

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The HidalgO Fit Coalition developed the strategies identified below during a series of strategic development discussions implemented with community stakeholders in 2018. Partners assessed community level data related to health outcomes and levels of physical activity for residents, and worked through a series of questions to determine appropriate strategies.

There are six steps to do this, as follows:

1. Determine the end condition of well being, or result, that they are going to focus on. By creating a shared the result, the stakeholders establish a common agenda that their diverse contributions can be directed towards.
2. Establish how that end condition of well-being is quantifiably measured. This type of measure is called an indicator. An indicator is a population-level measure and it quantifies progress towards the result.
3. Examine current performance for the indicator(s) by viewing it as a baseline. Partners also determine a forecast for where the community will be at the end of the year in in the absence of new strategies or actions. Will things improve, worsen, or stay the same?
4. Surface the story behind the curve. In other words, partners identify factors contributing to the behavior of the baseline as well factors restricting its behavior. The question why is important to consider here as it helps partners to get to the root causes relative to indicator performance. By identifying contributing and restricting factors, partners are able to pinpoint what isn't working that needs to be addressed but also what is working well that can potentially be strengthened.
5. Identify partners and the roles they can play in addressing contributing and restricting factors.

6. Propose a solution set to address the contributing and factors. The solution set should include evidence-based practices but also no cost/low cost solutions and off the walls.

1. Prioritize the strategies out of this solution by using a set of clear criteria.

7. Create action plans and implement them in the interest of executing strategies and measurably improving indicator performance, which contributes to progress for the result

To develop the Active Living Plan for Hidalgo County, the HidaLGO Fit Council applied this data driven decision-making process for a population indicator related to physical activity for adults in the region.

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES FOR THE HIDALGO FIT COALITION

Strategy: Leverage the strength, momentum, and productivity of existing coalitions

Hidalgo County and the South Texas region have a number of health collaborative efforts that are aligning stakeholder contributions to collectively impact whole population outcomes. While each of these collaborative efforts has a particular health focus – such as diabetes, early childhood outcomes for children ages 0-5, and food security or health access – and can feature different groups of partners or approaches towards collective impact, the ability to build upon existing efforts represents opportunity for leverage and scale. Moreover, factors impeding or promoting physical activity are often inter-related to the factors promoting diabetes, early childhood health, safety or school preparedness, or food insecurity or lack of healthcare access. For example, the barrier posed by transportation in less populated regions of Hidalgo County creates challenges that impact physical activity, diabetes, early childhood outcomes, food insecurity, and healthcare access. Strategies developed by one collaborative effort to resolve transportation barriers may help resolve challenges other collaborative efforts are seeking to address, too.

Performance measures:

- Number of active community coalitions serving Hidalgo County
- Number of active community coalitions serving Hidalgo County that have formally aligned their efforts with the work of the Active Living Plan by incorporating elements of the plan

- Percent of active community coalitions serving Hidalgo County that have formally aligned their efforts with the work of the Active Living Plan by incorporating elements of the plan

Strategy: Build a partnership across the region’s municipalities that take their local efforts to scale by increasing physical activity for Hidalgo County as a whole

Creating impact at a county level can be strengthened as the diverse municipalities serving the region to work together as a collaborative. The application of RBA and the use of Scorecard afford excellent opportunities to support this effort, with the cities of McAllen, Edinburg, Mission, Pharr, and others aligning their contributions in terms of resources, programming, and physical activity opportunities. The Hidalgo Fit coalition provides a natural vehicle for this level of county-city partnership to take place.

Performance measures:

- # of municipal governments operating within Hidalgo County that have aligned their efforts with the work of the Active Living Plan by incorporating elements of the plan
- % of municipal governments operating within Hidalgo County that have aligned their efforts with the work of the Active Living Plan by incorporating elements of the plan

Strategy: Develop and maintain a virtual dashboard to map and monitor the performance measurement processes for strategies included in the Active Living Plan

The Clear Impact Scorecard is performance management software based on the principles of Results-Based Accountability. Scorecard promotes continuous quality improvement on community-level outcomes and program-related client impacts. Scorecard directly supports and

facilitates data driven decision-making on population indicators and/or program-level performance measures, helping stakeholders to determine appropriate strategies and maintain mutual accountability for measurable progress.

Performance measures:

- # of performance measures from the Active Living Plan strategies that are populated in the virtual dashboard
- # of % Active Living Plan performance measures in the virtual dashboard that are trending positively after strategic implementation

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES FOR HIDALGO COUNTY BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Stakeholders from the private sector have an important role to play in supporting physical activity and wellness in Hidalgo County. Serving as champions that raise public awareness, promoting opportunities for physical activity, providing space or sponsoring events are just a few examples of contributions that business and industry leaders can play in supporting the Hidalgo County Active Living Plan's successful implementation.

Strategy: Engage business and industry leaders to sponsor annual events such as walk/runs or sports leagues

In addition to raising dollars for worthwhile causes such as breast cancer prevention, sporting events such as a walk or run provide an excellent opportunity for families to engage in physical activity

Performance measures:

- # of annual physical activity events or sports leagues sponsored by business and industry leaders
- \$ amount raised to support physical activity events or sports leagues

Strategy: Promote increased access to gyms by lowering the cost for low-income families

The membership fees of local gyms may prohibit individuals and families that otherwise would be willing to join. Lowering the cost of a gym membership may result an increase in demand and use by families that could then afford to join.

Performance measures

- # of gyms serving Hidalgo County
- Average number of individuals with active membership at gym
- # of gyms serving Hidalgo County that provide gym membership at sliding scale or reduced cost due to participating with Hidalgo Fit Coalition
- # of individuals with active membership who purchased gym membership at sliding scale or reduced cost

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES FOR HIDALGO COUNTY EDUCATION SECTOR

When it comes to ensuring that children and youth between the ages of zero and eighteen have opportunities to engage in physical activity, no set of stakeholders comes close to the formal education sector in terms of access and scale. Not only do children and youth participate in services during the formal school year, but also daycare centers and schools have the built

environments to support physical activity with playground equipment and ball fields or courts. Schools implement physical activity time during the school day and can promote family physical activity.

Strategy: Strengthen the interconnectedness of after school programs

No single organization can be held accountable for moving the needle at a whole community level. And for after school programs delivering important opportunities for physical exercise beyond normal school hours, helping them to reimagine themselves as a network of partners contributing towards physical activity across Hidalgo County is an important step in building a narrative of community impact across their respective efforts.

Performance measures:

- Total # of organizations providing after school programs to ISDs serving Hidalgo County
- Total # of students participating in after school programs to ISDs serving Hidalgo County
- Total # of hours of physical activity spent by students participating in after school programs to ISDs serving Hidalgo County

Strategy: Engage school districts to increase physical activity at all educational environments through recess and physical exercise curriculums

There are sixteen independent school districts serving Hidalgo County. Each has the potential to provide sufficient physical activity during the school day. Continued support at a policy level helps ensure that appropriate levels of physical activity are made available to elementary, middle, and high school students. A parallel layer of support for children ages 0-5 served by

early childhood centers will also be helpful. Instilling a positive attitude towards physical activity in children and youth can have a lifelong impact.

Performance measures

- # of ISDs serving Hidalgo County that ensure 30 minutes per day of physical activity for students in grades 1-5
- # of ISDs serving Hidalgo County that ensure 30 minutes per day of physical activity for students in grades 6-8
- # of ISDs serving Hidalgo County that offer physical activity as an elective for students in grades 9-12

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES FOR HIDALGO COUNTY HEALTH CARE SECTOR

The health care sector that serves Hidalgo County includes higher education institutions that focus on health research and health training, area hospitals, physicians, urgent care clinics, safety net care clinics, and other stakeholders. In developing the Active Living Plan, Hidalgo Fit Coalition partners considered what factors were helping to contribute to increased levels of physical activity amongst residents.

One important contribution offered by the health care system are wellness checks and physical exams provided to residents. These visits serve as important opportunities to identify potential health hazards, for health professionals to recommend possible solutions such as increased physical activity or a change in diet or nutrition, and for residents to voice questions or concerns about their health needs. Wellness check and physical exams can emphasize the importance of

physical activity and the risks of a sedentary lifestyle, including new research as it becomes available.

Strategy: Promote Lifestyle Medicine and Integrated Care models

Increase number of residents and providers who are participating in Lifestyle Medicine and integrated care models. For providers, it's getting them to understand the model and promote it with their clients.

Performance measures:

- # of people participating in Lifestyle Medicine course offered by Hidalgo County organization or provider
- % of people who participate in Lifestyle medicine course offered by Hidalgo County organization or provider that report an improved state of health after completing the program
- # of people participating in integrated care models offered by Hidalgo County organizations or provider
- % of people who participate in integrated care model offered by Hidalgo County organization or provider that report an improved state of health after accessing services

Strategy: Expand grant-funded capacity to promote physical activity

Increasing the number of applications submitted to compete for grants that support physical activity strategies, or by increasing staffing capacity to write grants, can help to ensure that appropriate funding levels to support physical activity continue unabated over time.

Performance measures

- # of applications submitted for grants that support physical activity in Hidalgo County
- # of grants awarded that support physical activity in Hidalgo County

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES FOR HIDALGO COUNTY MASS MEDIA

No other industry has the reach that mass media does when it comes to disseminating information to Hidalgo County residents. Whether it is through a television broadcast, a radio announcement or online reporting, mass media can deliver a finely tuned message to the public twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. That reach is scaled even greater when social media is taken into account. Mass media and/or social media can instantly communicate the benefits of physical activity and the risks of a sedentary lifestyle, as well as to promote and report on physical activity opportunities in the community.

Strategy: Gather and share stories of Hidalgo County residents who overcame barriers, including lack of motivation, transportation, or cost, to engage in physical activity

Personal testimonial can serve as powerful motivators for individuals who are considering taking that first step towards engaging in physical activity. Documenting and publicizing the narratives of individuals who are now physically active but were not, for whatever reason, can inspire residents to take positive steps in their own lives.

Performance measures

- # of news stories reported through local news outlets that focused on the benefits of engaging in physical activity

Strategy: Increase awareness about physical activity opportunities

The rise of the Internet and social media has created a cost effective and instantaneous way to keep informed about the latest physical activity opportunities. Websites such as the events calendar on the Hidalgo County website or for local news outlets provide venues where dates and information about physical activity events can be shared. Encouraging events to post their information in each of these locations will ensure that residents are informed and kept up to date.

Performance measures

- # of wellness and physical activity events publicized on the [events page of the Hidalgo Fit Coalition](#)
- # of user hits to the events page of the Hidalgo Fit Coalition

Strategy: Develop a community app that incentivizes physical activity

One approach that could incentivize physical activity is to create an app that tracks or collects data on physical activity for coupon incentives related to healthy living (QR Fit Trail). Providing incentives for hitting thresholds of physical activity such as an iPad might incentivize residents to begin engaging exercising.

Performance measures:

- Progress to completion on the development of the physical activity app
- # of users of the physical activity app

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

Both county and municipal governments maintain parks and recreation departments that are ideally suited to promote wellness and physical activity for Hidalgo County residents. The departments are responsible for operating safe spaces for physical activity and recreation for children, youth, adults, seniors, and families. They also promote physical activity opportunities through organized sports leagues such as softball or soccer.

Strategy: Expand the number of bike and hike trails

With thirty new miles scheduled to be unveiled in Summer 2019, Hidalgo County will feature nearly one hundred one hundred miles of hike and bike trails, which provides children, adults and families a way to safely ride bicycles, run or hike. One strategy proposed by the Hidalgo Fit Coalition is for the community to expand the trail network. A multifaceted approach through land donation, multi-use zoning, or repurposing space in existing parks would increase the physical space where Hidalgo County residents could safely participate in exercise.

Performance measures:

- Amount of land donated to the county for hike and bike trails
- # of new miles of hike and bike trails developed in Hidalgo County

Strategy: Create a Neighborhood Walk program that follows the Neighborhood Watch model

The Neighborhood Watch program engages residents to remain vigilant and report on potential criminal activity occurring in their neighborhoods. The concept is built on a concept where neighbors step up to take care of one another and look out for the well-being of their

neighborhood. The Hidalgo Fit Coalition propose a similar approach to promote physical activity where neighborhood leaders organize walks on a regular basis, neighborhood by neighborhood. The vision is an organic approach to increasing opportunities for residents to engage in physical activity but that strengthens social cohesion as well.

Performance measures:

- # of Neighborhood Walk groups established in Hidalgo County as reported to the Hidalgo Fit Coalition
- # of residents participating in Neighborhood Walk groups as reported to the Hidalgo Fit Coalition

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health has a vital role to play in ensuring the Active Living Plan is successfully implemented and that residents in Hidalgo County have opportunities to increase and maintain their levels of physical activity and wellness. Not only does the Hidalgo County Public Health department champion the Active Living Plan by convening stakeholders to develop and implement strategies but it also helps to communicate the benefits of physical activity and the risks of a sedentary lifestyle.

Strategy: Increase the number of Hidalgo County residents participating in the *Eating Smart, Being Active* program

Eating Smart, Being Active is an evidence-based curriculum designed to promote healthy eating and active living. This 9-week program currently operates out of five community centers serving

the county and serves up to 100 participants in hands-on learning about physical activity, nutrition, food preparation, and food resource management. Increasing awareness amongst community stakeholders – including doctors, healthcare networks, nonprofit organizations, and even faith-based groups – will ensure more residents, over time, are able to access this important resource. So will identifying ways to scale up and sustain this project over time.

Performance measures:

- # of individuals participating in Eating Smart, Being Active curriculum
- %of individuals completing Eating Smart, Being Active curriculum

Strategy: Implement fun, engaging health programming

A long distance run is not for everyone. Developing new opportunities for physical activities that are creative and elevate the fun factor may attract Hidalgo County residents who would otherwise stay at home. The Hidalgo Fit coalition will look to implement unique and exciting events that have a proven track record such as Ciclovía in San Antonio, which annually attracts tens of thousands of residents to participate in a day long festival dedicated to bike riding and wellness or physical activities.

Performance measures

- # of wellness and physical activity events conducted in Hidalgo County
- # of residents participating in wellness and physical activity events in Hidalgo County

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES FOR TRANSPORTATION, LAND USE AND COMMUNITY

DESIGN

The ability for Hidalgo County's residents to engage in physical activity is directly influenced by the accessibility and usability of safe public spaces. Stakeholders from the transportation, land use, and community design sectors are clearly an integral piece of the puzzle for implementing the Active Living Plan. Smart growth partners can promote safe routes for physical activity. And identifying land that can be used, safeguarding it through formal agreement, and preparing its use through developmental projects presents a multi-tiered process for stakeholder engagement.

Strategy: Support zoning or rezoning that takes into consideration the usability of roads for running or public spaces for physical activity

Sharing the road is not likely to happen without a managed approach. In Hidalgo County, with its ever-evolving blend of rural and urban infrastructure, it will take the coordinated efforts of public and private partners to conditions that are favorable to motor vehicles yet also conducive for the physical activity of residents. Evidence-based practices such as Complete Streets, which are roads designed for safe use by all types of traffic – vehicular or otherwise – offer blueprints that Hidalgo County could draw inspiration from in the future.

Strategy: Set aside and develop land specifically for the purpose of physical activity

As an illustration of the impact this type of approach can create in the community, the Hidalgo County Precinct 2 Indoor Sports Complex opened in April 2019. The first of its kind anywhere in South Texas, the complex has an indoor baseball field, batting cages, and pitching mounds, and

also offers cross-fit classes. It is free of charge with a schedule that ensures a wide range of participation to all community members, young and old. Continuing to support this type of public infrastructure will help promote greater opportunities for Hidalgo County residents to be physically active.

Performance measures

- # of zoning or rezoning ordinances passed to enhance road usability
- # of miles in Hidalgo County with a favorable Walk Score (metric about the usability of terrain for pedestrians and bicyclists)
- Rate of growth of public spaces dedicated to physical activity (sports complexes, etc.)

ACTIVE LIVING PLAN STRATEGIES FOR VOLUNTEERS AND NON PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Finally, the HidaLGO Fit Coalition has clearly delineated a space for volunteers and non-profit organizations to support and help implement the Active Living Plan. The generous donation of volunteer time and talent can be applied toward leading or implementing the various community efforts identified in the plan or to helping to champion the plan with the community at large or new potential partners. In addition to programmatic support that non-profits may offer, especially in scenarios where scopes of work align with Active Living Plan objectives, these organizations may have staff that can support the communication and outreach of strategies.

Performance measures

- # of non-profit organizations serving Hidalgo County that have committed their support to the Active Living Plan

- # of volunteers providing support in the implementation of Active Living Plan strategies

Performance Measure Dashboard for Hidalgo County Active Living Plan Strategies