

Preparation

Create your partnership

There may be several individuals and organizations that can assist you in the design, plan and implementation and evaluation of your environment or policy initiative. Colorectal cancer environments and policies have been implemented with the assistance of a wide range of partners.

Example partners to implement your colorectal cancer initiative include:

- state and local government officials
- transportation offices
- parks departments
- food industry – producers, growers, retail outlets
- community leaders and policy-makers
- local businesses - owners, managers
- schools –teachers, sports coaches, nurses, food service personnel
- legal council
- health care professionals
- hospitals, health care facilities
- researchers and academics
- community organizations and coalitions
- advocacy organizations
- local media
- faith leaders and faith based organizations
- parents and families
- employers and worksites

Try to think of partners that can serve a variety of roles. For example, you may need certain partners to help you create a plan for policy change to promote colorectal cancer screening (e.g. health care professionals and policymakers), while some partners may be more helpful in implementing an environmental change (e.g., hospital administrators and architects).

It is also important to evaluate your efforts. To evaluate an environment or policy initiative, it is often useful to seek out technical assistance from local colleges, universities or others with this experience.

For more information on engaging partners, go to [Partnerships](#).

Identify your population

Typically, colorectal cancer environment and policy interventions target colorectal cancer awareness and screening rates for both the general population and specific populations, such as those with inadequate or no health insurance.

As you start to consider your own population, it will be important to identify important aspects such as:

- What is your population?

- Are there subgroups within this population?
- What are the geographic boundaries?
- What are the shared social and cultural characteristics of this community?

For more information on identifying your population, go to [Assessment and Prioritization](#).

Once you have identified your population you will need to consider what may be the best communication channels to reach your population, such as television, radio, newspaper, billboards, posters, flyers, computer kiosk, video, table tents and tray liners, bus stop shelter displays, bus signs, grocery cart displays or signs. Some communities may use different media channels than others or use some channels more than others. Similarly, you should pay attention to where these channels should be placed to gain the attention of the community of interest. You may want to host or have an event to be the source of media attention.

Environment and policy interventions have been implemented in a variety of settings including communities, health care facilities and worksites. For more information on settings for colorectal cancer interventions, go to [Colorectal Cancer in Different Settings](#).

Examples of environment and policy interventions to increase screening rates for colorectal cancer that have been used in other communities include:

- Establishment of partnerships to offer screening services on a no cost or sliding fee scale
- Engagement in planning processes to increase access to colorectal cancer screening
- Distribution of free colorectal cancer screening kits

Record your intervention goals and objectives

If you and your partnership have not formed your intervention goals and objectives, you will need to do so. Although you may change your goals and objectives, it is important to start with some idea of what you want to accomplish for this intervention. If your partnership is also interested in addressing lifestyle risk factors for colorectal cancer, please refer to [Nutrition](#), [Physical Activity](#) or [Tobacco](#).

An example of a colorectal cancer environment and policy intervention goal and objective is:

- Goal: Increase early detection rates for colorectal cancer
- Objective: Ensure that all community members over the age of 50 has access to a free or low-cost colorectal cancer screening

This will likely require having a good idea of the community's needs, the political climate and community support for the policy or environmental changes. It may also be helpful to create a logic model to organize your goals, objectives and the action steps to meet your goals and objectives. Some funding sources have very specific logic models for your partnership to use, so be aware of different requirements. For

more information on developing goals and objectives, visit [Preparing for Your Intervention in Readiness and Preparation](#).

Assess your community capacity and needed resources

Public health practitioners and community organizations can assist the partnership in determining what actions will be most helpful in creating environmental and policy changes. These actions may include communicating with the community as a whole or with specific decision-makers. In either case, it is important to provide the information about the need for environmental and policy changes in a way that will capture the intended audience's attention. This may include a public action and a large number of people or a smaller action that involves more face-to-face communication. Public health practitioners and community organizations can take part in either of these types of actions in a variety of ways. For example, they can provide current, relevant information and data to help develop the messages conveyed. They can also help identify appropriate audiences for a particular message. Because the intent of these activities is to create broad based environmental and policy change statements, it is often useful to organize media coverage of the event and ensure that public officials are aware of it.

If your partnership receives public funds, many things are allowed that support environmental and policy change initiatives. You can provide current data or other educational information on an issue as it is experienced in your community. Likewise, your partnership can help by developing a list of legislators to contact based on their interest in the issue or their position on certain legislative committees.

These different approaches and activities may require a variety of different resources.

Example resources needed include:

- a copy machine or access to a printing facility to get brochures and other printed materials out to the community
- cameras, video recording devices or audio recording devices and associated technology to document and communicate community problems
- access to billboards, bus stops, train stations or other locations to post messages

An environment and policy intervention will require certain skill sets depending on the specific strategies used. For example, it may be necessary to have skills in planning, community organization, urban design and planning or public policy. Others have found it useful to get assistance from experts in these areas to ensure that communications related to political or environmental changes are appropriate and that resources to assist individuals who wish to increase screening rates of colorectal cancer are made known to community members. You may want to have your staff participate in some type of training to build capacity within your organization to collaborate with these other partners.

Evaluation of environment and policy interventions may be complex and may require assistance from researchers and other partners who have experience with study design, measurement development, data collection, data analysis or translation of research findings into practical implications for your community.

In general, efforts to draw attention to your environmental and political efforts may be costly, so it will be important to develop a budget and estimate the costs of advocating for the policy and maintaining it over time.

The development and implementation of some of the increased access intervention strategies are relatively inexpensive and may be considered a good investment. However, the enforcement of policies and other changes to the environment may be very expensive.

These interventions can be conducted in neighborhoods, schools, worksites or other environments that do not require renting out space to implement the intervention. However, changes to the environment itself will require space considerations.

The [Readiness and Preparation](#) and [Capacity](#) sections provide information and resources to help you think about the resources you might need for your intervention. For specific examples of tools and resources for colorectal cancer that have been created and used by other communities, visit [Tools and Resources for Colorectal Cancer](#).

Design your intervention activities

- *Create community awareness*

One way to gain community support for your policy or environmental change is to raise community members' awareness regarding the strengths of and challenges to preventing colorectal cancer within your community. One way to do this is to ask people with colorectal cancer to speak to others in the community about their experiences. You can also ask people with colorectal cancer to document community characteristics in need of change by keeping a journal, taking photographs, videotaping or audio taping comments. This has been referred to by other groups as an audit of the environment. The documented evidence from these assessments can be used to identify and prioritize problems as well as to advocate for change. For example, you might show pictures or videotapes to community members and policymakers.

When promoting a policy change, it is important to gather sound scientific evidence from a wide variety of disciplines to document the health risks of colorectal cancer and the benefits of prevention and screening. Previous efforts have included an assessment of the health effects of colorectal cancer, documentation of what has already been done to address the issue, the specific historical, cultural and political context, and the economic impact of changes in the environment. All of these may use quantitative or qualitative data collection.

Once this information has been gathered, it is important to present the information back to the community and important stakeholders in a way that shows why the issue should be a concern and specify why a policy would help create a desired change.

These presentations can help identify and prioritize problems as well as advocate for change in a way that shows why policy and environmental changes are important for preventing and managing colorectal cancer.

It is also important to consider the kinds of information, as well as the methods of sharing information, that will be most useful in getting key stakeholders involved.

Example strategies for information sharing include newsletters, community meetings, websites, city council meetings and social networks.

Information or evidence alone may not convince key decision-makers, they may also need to see constituent support for these policy or environmental changes. Constituent support may be demonstrated by having a group of people who would be affected by the policy or environmental changes speak to what they see as the benefits of enacting such a change. For example, individuals at high-risk for colorectal cancer might talk about why free or low-cost screening is a good idea.

Economic feasibility is important to policy implementation, political and community support and long-term success. Policymakers may want to know about the economic costs and benefits of the policy or environmental change, so be prepared to answer questions about the costs and benefits of various options.

In addition, while you have the attention of critical decision-makers, it is helpful to ask for advice on how to move forward with a legislative or environmental and organizational strategy to address the issue. This will help ensure that time for your interactions match the policy process and that goals of all partners are met.

- *Promoting community supports*

Think about what your community members and decision-makers want as well as what is feasible based on political and community support and available funding. Consider how long it may take to create these changes and whether the support from community members and decision-makers will continue as long as you need it to. Most importantly, work with your partners to figure out what changes are reasonable and practical in the community. These interventions will be more effective when characteristics of your population are taken into consideration (see [Assessment and Prioritization](#)).

Social action is an approach that can be taken to increase support for environment and policy interventions. This approach can help to spotlight how the environment or a policy can affect people's health. Social action may include the use of confrontation or conflict.

For example, a group of community members might join together to light a candle for each person who has died from **colorectal cancer**. These approaches can sometimes get people's attention when other approaches have failed. Though this strategy can help to define and bring attention to a problem, it is also necessary to strive towards effective solutions. Working with your partners through social planning can assist you in moving from awareness of the concerns to acting to create changes in environments and policies related to colorectal cancer.

When you feel you have adequate support, you can focus on environment and policy changes. Make sure that your partnership is prepared to create environment or policy level changes. Environmental changes require support from the site of interest as well as those using the site. A policy is a plan or course of action intended to

influence and determine decisions, actions and rules or regulations that govern our collective daily life. Policies can be created and enforced by organizations, schools and workplaces or by the government at local, state or federal levels.

Advocating for environment or policy changes is another approach communities can use to create changes in their communities. Advocacy is the act of arguing in favor of or against an issue or policy. A well-structured organization can act as a public advocate to define a problem that affects many individuals or communities and can work to unite their voices and actions to create change. Larger advocacy organizations often develop regional or national strategies to address issues and then work with local organizations to obtain support to implement these strategies.

While some advocacy groups may work directly on changing access to resources, others may work on changing patterns of behavior. By working with both types of groups, you may have linkages to larger organizations that can help define concerns and develop potential solutions.

NOTE: If your partnership is considering public advocacy strategies, be aware that most organizations that receive public funds cannot participate in lobbying activities. Lobbying activities include letter or phone campaigns and petition drives.

For more information about other environment and policy strategies, go to [Tools and Resources](#).

- *Create a timeline and assign roles and responsibilities*

Work with your partners to decide on the timeline for the intervention and who will be responsible for carrying out the intervention activities. Be very specific about roles, tasks and timelines to ensure that the intervention is implemented successfully. Include information about when your message will be distributed and by what communication channels.

Identify potential barriers

Think about the potential barriers that may be encountered along the way and prepare your reaction to these barriers.

Some of the barriers you might encounter:

- Cost – Develop a budget and estimate costs of creating, implementing and enforcing the policy or environmental change.
- Resources – Consider whether your partnership has members experienced in presenting the need for new policy or environmental changes as well as designing environments, drafting policies or building on existing relationships with others who can assist in these activities. A substantial amount of personnel time is required for all phases of these types of interventions.
- Planning and preparation phases – Consider how to get access to stakeholders to draw attention to policy and environmental change, how to build support for these changes and how to get buy-in from community members to adopt a balanced eating pattern.

- Implementation and evaluation– Consider how to find funds to support broader environmental changes and how to get people to use the environments.
- Maintenance– Consider how to keep participants eating healthy and how to allocate resources to maintain the intervention activities over time.
- Political representatives and key decision makers – Be persistent in trying to get the attention of policymakers and influential community leaders. It may be important for you and your partners to get buy in from various key decision-makers. For example, representatives from pharmacies or health care providers' offices. These decision-makers may not understand the importance or want the added work of changing what is already offered or in existence. Others may feel burdened by having educational messages that put their staff in a position to have to respond to questions when they may not be prepared to do so.
- Loss of revenue – Some decision-makers may be concerned that either changes in cost or availability of different products or costly changes to land use or the environment will result in an overall decrease in revenue. It may be important to work with decision-makers to develop ways to assess the impact of these changes upfront through public surveys, and case studies.

Barriers that have been encountered in other colorectal cancer environment and policy interventions are summarized below.

- Health care providers and their office staff may be resistant to a change in office protocol
- Although screening tests would be offered at an easily accessible location for little to no cost, people still would not use the screening tool
- Some types of environmental changes may be more long lasting than others. These types of interventions have not been sufficiently evaluated to know which will have the most significant long term effect.

Plan your evaluation methods and measures

- *Consider your evaluation strategy*

In order to determine if your colorectal cancer environment and policy changes are working, you will need to evaluate your efforts. It is important to design your evaluation in the planning phase of your intervention because you will need to be able to measure the impact of the environment and policy changes.

Work with members of the population to identify community needs and gain support from local government officials, policymakers, community members and other community decision-makers through participatory approaches or focus groups. Colorectal cancer environment and policy interventions might include an assessment of current colorectal cancer-related policies or environments in order to examine what changes need to be made or what new policies or developments need to occur to meet the needs of the community. You can also assess risk factors of colorectal cancer and the benefits of colorectal cancer screening. Others have also included an assessment of the existing access to resources, such as medical supplies and screening tools, and places, such as pharmacies and supermarkets, to support colorectal cancer prevention and screening. To develop an effective policy or environmental initiative, the specific historical, cultural and political contexts as well

as the economic impacts of colorectal cancer-related changes are important to understand and evaluate.

It is useful to consider process, impact and outcome evaluation. Process evaluation enables you to assess if your program is being implemented as you intended. Environment and policy interventions might include an assessment of how the policy was implemented and enforced. It may also be useful to assess the process used to develop and plan the environments and policies. This may include an assessment of the coalition processes, such as decision making and conflict management, as well as specific logistics, such as time of meeting and location of meeting.

Impact evaluation helps you determine if you are reaching your intermediate objectives. For environments and policies, it is important to assess exposure to the intervention. This can be done, for example, through a telephone survey to the targeted audience regarding their awareness of a new or amended environment or policy change. Environment and policy surveys can be used to measure exposure factors and also to assess changes knowledge, attitudes or behaviors.

Focus the evaluation on the objectives of the intervention. If the objective was to change access by increasing the availability of particular resources, it is important to assess access. Alternatively, if the intent was to improve enforcement of a policy, then it is important to assess enforcement and factors that influence enforcement.

- *Challenges to evaluating environments and policies*

There are several challenges in evaluating colorectal cancer environments and policies that should be considered

- It is very challenging to establish whether environment and policy strategies cause behavior change. Some individuals may have changed their behaviors because of pressure from family and friends, and some may have changed their behavior on their own. It is important to get as much information as possible about the reasons for behavior changes.
- The exact combination of intervention strategies that will be best to change rates of colorectal cancer screening and prevention behaviors is unknown.
- When environment and policy interventions are used, it is difficult to figure out which intervention strategies led to the changes that were observed in the evaluation.