

BCHLA Physical Activity Strategy Evaluation Report

September 2008-September 2010

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BC Recreation and Parks Association

Executive Summary

The BCHLA Physical Activity Strategy (PAS) was a comprehensive and integrated approach to getting British Columbians, aged 35 to 54 years to become more active. The Strategy built on existing opportunities and infrastructures, addressed life circumstances of the target population and supported an environment that nourished and enhanced physical activity. The four initiatives that comprised the PAS include: Walk BC, Everybody Active (EA), Built Environment and Active Transportation (BEAT) and Community Based Awareness (CBA). These four initiatives began implementation in January 2008 and concluded in March 2010, with the exception of Walk BC which has funding until September 2010.

The purpose of this report is to shed insight into the accomplishments of the PAS. More specifically, the report addresses the following questions:

- What was the reach of the PAS, both at an individual, community and organizational level?
- What activities did the PAS deliver?
- What are the outcomes of the PAS?
- To what extent were the PAS initiatives integrated?
- What lessons were learned as a result of the PAS?

For further detail on the evaluation questions and the theoretical framework please see the *Evaluation Framework Document* dated September 11, 2008.

The data included in this report were collected from EA, BEAT, Walk BC and CBA activities (grants, workshops, and Walk BC website and physician referral program) that were implemented from September 2008 to March 2010. The methodologies utilized to collect the data include the following: feedback forms from workshops, final reports from grant programs, registration records, telephone interviews and web analytics.

The aggregate findings presented combine the data from the 4 PAS initiatives (BEAT, EA, Walk BC and CBA) and provide insight into the overall impact of the PAS. This report begins with a brief description of the methodology used to conduct the evaluation. In subsequent sections the findings, organized by evaluation question, are provided. The report concludes with a section describing lessons learned.

What was the reach of the PAS?

- The PAS reached 202 communities across the province through workshops, grant funding and the physician engagement program. This reach exceeded all expectations and was diverse in terms of size, type and location of community. Communities ranged from small Aboriginal communities on the coast of BC to large urban centers such as Prince George to mid size communities such as Chilliwack.
- The PAS reached 63 Aboriginal communities and organizations. This reach also surpassed expectations in terms of number of Aboriginal communities reached as well as the geographic location of the various Aboriginal communities which were distributed throughout province.
- In terms of reach by workshop, the PAS workshops were attended by 3018 participants.

- Local government was the most prevalent type of organization reached by the PAS workshops (56%), this category includes departments of recreation. This was followed by other (14%), non-governmental organizations (9%), health (9%), consultants/private (6%), regional districts (4%) and the provincial government (2%).
- In terms of types of positions represented at the PAS workshops, the coordinator/planner position was the position most frequently represented (33%), followed by instructor/trainers (17%), other (17%), programmer (13%), managers (11%), directors (6%) and administration (2%).
- Additional components of Walk BC also demonstrated reach. The Walk BC website was visited by 16,649 unique visitors during the evaluation time frame and presently has 310 regular members. Over 300 physicians registered for the physician referral program.

What activities did the PAS deliver?

- The PAS offered 78 workshops over the evaluation time frame. These workshops consisted of BEAT summits, public lectures and workshops for professionals; EA workshops on engagement, social inclusion, promising practices, Everybody Gets to Play™ and EA for Health; Walk BC workshops for walkers and walk leaders; and CBA workshops on M.A.P tools and resources.
- The PAS distributed \$1,651,700 in grant funding to BC communities. These grants were utilized to develop active transportation plans, implement physical activity campaigns and programs, implement walking programs and to build community capacity around low income access opportunities.
- A number of resources were created as a result of the PAS (print, video and website) to support communities in their efforts to increase physical activity. These resources were distributed through workshops, conferences, websites and mail.
- Additional PAS activities delivered include the Physician Referral Program (311 physicians registered), creation and maintenance of the Walk BC website (310 regular members), the Healthy Workplace Month initiative (51 workplaces registered) and Move for Healthy Day events and activities (over 2100 walkers).

What are the outcomes of the PAS?

Satisfaction

- On average, 90% of PAS workshop participants were either very satisfied or satisfied with the training received at the workshops.
- Grant recipients also commented on how important the PAS grant funds were to making “things happen in their community.” As one of the CBA grant recipients stated: “This campaign was a wonderful opportunity for our city to do some positive advertising around the benefits of physical activity. If not for the grant, it wouldn’t have happened.” Several of the grant

communities commented that they used the work completed by the grant to apply for additional funding. For example, BEAT grant communities leveraged an additional \$3,351, 774 from Local Motion as a result of their completed Active Transportation Plans. As one BEAT grant recipient commented: “this active transportation plan has been tremendously useful and was used to apply for further funding (\$250,000)” which the community subsequently received.

In-kind support

- The financial summaries from the grant reports demonstrate that to date, PAS initiatives received over \$387,101 of in-kind support. This number is likely significantly higher as not all reporting forms asked for information on in-kind contributions.

Community residents reached

- PAS reached 260,877 community residents through activities as a result of grant programs. However, the depth of the reach varied across initiative. For example, CBA reach is comprised of the estimated impact of media awareness activities (e.g. mail outs, newspaper ads etc) and actual participation in physical activities. BEAT community resident reach numbers are derived from community consultations conducted when grant communities were developing active transportation plans. EA figures are based on community members consulted in development of access activities and initiatives and community members active as a result of the focus community initiatives. Walk BC community resident reach numbers are based on participation in physical activities as a result of grant funding. It should also be noted that this number will likely become significantly higher over time as the various PAS grant initiatives move from the planning stage to implementation (e.g. BEAT pathways, EA activities).

Intention to continue

- Almost three-quarters (71%) of workshop participants from Walk BC, BEAT and EA workshops stated that they intend to take future action on the strategic priorities identified at the workshops.
- Similarly, most of the grant recipients from the PAS initiatives intend to continue the work initiated with grant funding. A CBA grant recipient commented that the displays and materials developed with grant funding “will be used for years to come in community events.”

To what extent were the PAS initiatives integrated?

- Over 50% of PAS communities were involved in 2 or more of the 4 PAS initiatives. Twenty-seven percent of communities were involved in 2 initiatives; 20% of communities were involved in 3 PAS initiatives; and 10% of the communities were involved in 4 PAS initiatives.

Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from the PAS initiatives are underpinned by two key themes—the need for flexibility and for adequate time to implement initiatives and measure outcomes. These two constructs facilitate a community mobilization implementation approach leading to a greater likelihood of sustainability.

Fortunately, swift implementation of the PAS initiatives was aided by the partnerships that were already in place through the lead organizations. These partners were an integral part of the planning process and as a result were committed to the implementation of the initiatives and were ready to move forward quickly once implementation began.

Conclusion

The PAS made a concerted effort to adhere to a number of values and principles when implementing the PAS initiatives. These included: working collaboratively; building capacity; integrating efforts into existing networks, platforms and programs; being fiscally responsible and viable; and working toward sustainable outcomes. This approach leveraged the momentum of existing physical activity programs, provided fair access to physical activities across the province and reached a large number of people province wide.

The objective of the PAS was to help achieve the Winning Legacy physical activity goal by decreasing the proportion of inactive adults aged 35 to 54 years by 20%. In actual numbers this means 115,000 individuals aged 35 to 54 who were presently inactive would become active enough to achieve health benefits as a result of the PAS. While it is difficult to determine whether the PAS achieved this objective (due to challenges in collecting surveillance data and tight timeframes), what is known is that PAS initiatives reached approximately 260,877 British Columbians, the majority of which were from the 35 to 54 age group. In addition, these British Columbians reflected the life circumstances of the PAS target population. Consider the following:

- Well over 75% of the communities reached through PAS activities were small, rural communities;
- Thirty percent of the communities reached through PAS activities were aboriginal communities;
- Close to 30% of communities reached by PAS activities were located in the Northern part of the Province (Cariboo, North Coast/Nechako and Peace/Northern Rockies)

These outcomes are impressive, however, the success of the PAS is far more robust than reach. The PAS had a lasting impact on the way communities go about the business of increasing physical activity among their residents. Community organizations and members are working together toward a common goal; physical activity programs and policies have been altered to further encourage physical activity among community residents; and communities are using work completed as a result of PAS activities as a springboard from which to leverage additional funding. There is no question, the PAS was extremely successful and will continue to have a lasting effect on the capacity and ability of communities to create greater awareness of the benefits of and opportunities for physical activity. This in turn, will lead to increased participation in physical activity among the residents of British Columbia.