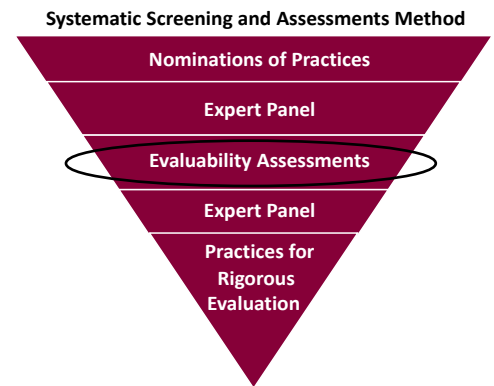


Active Transportation Spotlight: San Francisco Sunday Streets

Evaluability Assessment Overview

Evaluability Assessments (EAs) are a method to better understand innovative policies and initiatives being implemented in states and communities. A component of the Systematic Screening and Assessment Method (SSA), EAs provide preliminary evidence about which initiatives have the greatest potential for effectiveness and can inform subsequent evaluation activities. EAs are considered a “pre-evaluation” activity to determine whether a more rigorous evaluation is feasible or merited for a particular initiative, often saving costs and time. EAs also benefit the initiative by strengthening implementation and local evaluation.

The Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) used EAs to identify the potential promise of several nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention initiatives and their readiness for rigorous evaluation. EAs consist of a site visit to assess implementation, data availability, intended outcomes, and staff capacity to better understand an initiative or policy. Upon completion of the site visit, feedback is provided to the initiative, which includes recommendations for future evaluation.



What kinds of Evaluability Assessments were conducted?

In 2011, DNPAO used the SSA method to learn of the potential promise of five state- and local level active transportation initiatives. Active transportation initiatives encourage active transport like walking and bicycling through the promotion of a supportive infrastructure for leisure or commute activities in multiple settings.

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One of the five initiatives selected for the DNPAO Evaluability Assessments (2011) project was San Francisco, California's Sunday Streets program.

Inspired by Ciclovía in South America, during which much of the city goes completely car-free every Sunday, San Francisco's Sunday Streets creates temporary public space by closing off two to five-mile stretches of a neighborhood's streets to automobile traffic, opening them to pedestrians, bicyclists, and activities for five hours on a predetermined Sunday.

Active Transportation Initiatives Selected (2011)

- Boston, Massachusetts Bike to Market Project
- Missouri Livable Streets Project
- Nashville, Tennessee Regional Transportation Plan
- **Sunday Streets in San Francisco, California**
- Washtenaw County, Michigan, Building Healthy Communities Initiative

The program is co-sponsored by a non-profit organization called Livable City and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. Collectively, organization and agency staff work closely with the San Francisco Mayor's offices, other city departments and neighborhood stakeholders, to identify communities that are underserved in terms of public, open, and safe space for residents to engage in recreation and physical activity, and in which health disparities are higher. Neighborhoods that do not have adequate or well-maintained parks or other recreational spaces are a high priority for route selection. In order to increase the program's reach to such areas, the routes are rotated to different neighborhoods around the city using existing infrastructure to create “temporary” parks and open space.

Goals of Sunday Streets

The Sunday Streets program aims to create sustainable, livable communities and healthy, active populations by providing open, public space for safe, car-free recreation that promotes physical activity and social interaction. The street closures are the central platform by which the Sunday Streets program hopes to accomplish its four main goals:

Provide open space for safe, car-free recreation. Through collaboration between city and county agencies, permits are obtained for each event, and traffic is rerouted and monitored, among other activities. The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, a local longstanding bicycle advocacy organization manages the training, coordinating, and deploying of volunteers to staff each event.

Increase physical activity and other healthy lifestyle behaviors. Once a route is chosen, Sunday Streets staff works with community liaisons, local merchants, non-profit organizations, and residents to promote the event to the neighborhood residents and to engage the community in planning culturally appropriate activities during the event.

Serve as a model for other open space initiatives. The Sunday Streets program staff use the events as a platform to play an active role in advocating for policy changes at the city, county, and state level that both provide for long-term sustainability for Sunday Streets and facilitate the creation of more public, open car-free space beyond the Sunday Streets events.

Strengthen networks within and between communities. Routes are selected to encourage and facilitate movement and interaction within and between communities. Sunday Streets events offer the forum for community members to come together to plan, execute, and participate in the events and in the process, learn more about each other, what their communities have to offer, and to build stronger connections among themselves.

Program Accomplishments

Since Sunday Streets began in 2008, it has accomplished the following:

- Sunday Streets attracted over 20,000 participants in 2010.
- Sunday Streets has used more than 1,200 volunteers in the three years of the program, recruiting 125-175 per event.
- Sunday Streets staff has produced 17 events from 2010-2011.

Considerations for Similar Initiatives

The following considerations were developed by the San Franciscan stakeholders involved in the EA conducted with San Francisco's Sunday Streets. When planning or implementing a similar active transportation initiative, consider the following:

- **Neighborhood Engagement.** To improve neighborhood involvement, engage racially, ethnically, and economically diverse community members in the planning process. Involve community members in route selection, and consider strategies to connect residents to resources in their own neighborhoods and to nearby communities. Involve local merchants by messaging the "business case" for the event.
- **Logistics and Marketing.** Work across city agencies to coordinate logistical arrangements, such as permits. Develop guidelines for how to provide programming activities that encourage both physical activities and open space throughout an event. To market the event and overall program, explore strategies to brand the initiative.
- **Program Sustainability.** To sustain the program long-term, cultivate relationships with policymakers to garner their support. Identify and secure diverse sources of funding. For support with coordination of the events, consider strategies to recruit, train, deploy, and retain a strong cadre of volunteers.

Evaluation Considerations for Similar Initiatives

A rigorous evaluation of similar initiatives should be appropriately conceptualized and implemented. Evaluation activities for a similar program should consider the following evaluation questions and potential data sources:

- Are the events well attended? Consider using a tool called a hang counter to record participants as they either enter an event or pass by a predetermined check point. A less resource-intensive strategy is to use pencil and paper to record tallies as individuals pass by. This strategy requires multiple data collectors stationed at predetermined points.
- What changes are occurring in levels of physical activity during and beyond each event? Physical activity levels during each event can be observed using the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC) Tool. To understand changes in physical activity beyond each event would require a baseline measure of physical activity among participants and following up with participants. Measures of participants' activities, length of time participants are engaged in these activities, and the intensity at which they are active, would need to be considered.
- What changes are occurring in community cohesion? Social capital instruments can be used to evaluate this outcome.
- What are the environmental impacts of the events?
- What are the economic impacts of the events for nearby merchants? Sales data from merchants could be collected and compared to similar Sundays.

Resources

- For more information on Sunday Streets: <http://www.sundaystreetsf.com/>
- For more on Evaluability Assessments: Leviton, L.C., Khan, L.K., & Dawkins, N. (Eds). (2010). The Systematic Screening and Assessment Method: Finding Innovations Worth Evaluating. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 125.

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