

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

Promise Partnerships, Boise, Idaho

Funded by Trinity Health, the four-year Transforming Communities Initiative (TCI) supported eight communities to build capacity for — and successfully implement — policy, system, and environmental (PSE) change strategies. Each collaboration — involving a lead community organization with a full-time TCI-funded program director, the local Trinity Health hospital, and other partners — received grant funding and technical assistance and participated in peer learning opportunities. This site profile, prepared by the cross-site evaluation team at the Georgia Health Policy Center in partnership with the local partners, outlines the work and impact supported by TCI between 2016 and 2020.

The Partnership

The aim of Treasure Valley Promise Partnerships is to “address the social determinants/influencers of health, including childhood obesity, tobacco use, breastfeeding protection for Idaho moms, access to healthy and affordable foods, active living, supportive healthy K–12 school environments, and high-quality early education, through improved policies, systems and environments across Ada and Canyon counties.” Promise Partnerships serves specific communities within Idaho’s two largest counties — Ada and Canyon counties. This area is known as the Treasure Valley and includes more than 33% of Idaho’s population. Promise Partnerships’ efforts target “pockets of highest need” in the cities of Boise, Caldwell, and Nampa, focusing on neighborhoods where many residents are socioeconomically disadvantaged and areas that have limited access to healthy food and/or health services.

Promise Partnerships’ emphasis on policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change solutions in addressing the social influencers of health provides a common agenda toward which multiple partners from different sectors align and collaborate. United Way operated as the lead community organization for the TCI grant and utilized a collective impact approach. The structure can be described as a “network of partnerships.” The partners focus on leveraging existing resources and groups, including coalitions, committees, and partnerships, to plan and implement PSE strategies.

Promise Partnership Partners	Area of Focus
Saint Alphonsus Health System	Tobacco, communications, school readiness
United Way of Treasure Valley	Backbone organization, school readiness, community schools
Red Sky PR	Tobacco
Risch Pisca	Tobacco lobbying
Mosaic Advisors	Breastfeeding lobbying
Initiative for Healthy Schools at Boise State University	School wellness/Whole Child Supports
Vitruvian Planning	Built environment
Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children	Early childhood education

Approach

The TCI work was led and facilitated by the United Way of Treasure Valley (UWTV) and the Saint Alphonsus Health System. The core TCI team included a lead for each strategy, all of whom met at least quarterly to leverage each other's work, brain power, and creativity in addressing the issues each strategy faced. UWTV served as the backbone convener and also as the lead of the community schools work.



"Now that we've had these experiences standing up some of these different initiatives from school work, to community-based transportation policy, to statewide policies around tobacco and breastfeeding, we have a better idea of how to work together. ... [T]hose relationships will continue to carry us through different types of initiatives."

Throughout TCI, Promise Partnerships engaged stakeholders and cultivated relationships that were strong enough to adapt to changes, overcome significant barriers, and ultimately pivot to better address the identified needs of the community, including pandemic response. Promise Partnerships started TCI with a focus on making policy change at state, county, and district levels, and the partners conducted extensive lobbying and advocacy. Throughout the project, the partners adapted their work to include local and school-level policy as well as systems and environmental changes to address community needs.

- Promise Partnerships allocated around **48%** of their funds to support the program director, director of community impact, community schools coordinator, and their associated work.
- Promise Partnerships issued subawards to partners with around **22%** of funds.
- Promise Partnerships leveraged more than **\$1 million** in matching funds derived from **95%** cash and **5%** in-kind contributions made by key partners, school districts, and local businesses and financial institutions.

Areas of Impact

The TCI partners focused on legislation and policy change for tobacco control, breastfeeding, and pre-K, as well as changes to the school environment, the built environment, and coalition development.

DOMAIN	YEARS	PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES INFLUENCED BY TCI-SUPPORTED WORK
 Public School Wellness	1–4	The Initiative for Healthy Schools at Boise State University assessed and made recommendations for how to strengthen wellness policies in 3 districts. In the Caldwell School District, implementation of Smart Snacks in School standards and comprehensive physical activity programs reached 6,300 students, and TCI partners implemented a Whole Child Initiative, based on the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports program at 10 schools — entirely with financial support from TCI.
 Safe Routes to School	1–4	Vitruvian Planning developed school-specific walkability and bikeability recommendations through parent surveys, observations, and community walk audits for all 10 schools within Caldwell city limits. The city of Caldwell used these recommendations to secure a \$250,000 state grant for sidewalk and bike infrastructure.

DOMAIN	YEARS	PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES INFLUENCED BY TCI-SUPPORTED WORK
 Community Schools	1–4	United Way of Treasure Valley implemented community schools with intensive support at one elementary school, which served as a model demonstration site. In addition, a learning community and multiple large-scale trainings helped to create regional and statewide structures for the program to expand in 25 schools across 7 districts in Idaho.
 Early Childhood Education	1–4	TCI provided funds for advocacy and lobbying around pre-K funding legislation changes at the state level. The program director and partners supported pre-K stakeholders to restructure and rebrand under the Ready Idaho Coalition. Members of the coalition applied for and received a federal Preschool Development Grant in spring 2020.
 Built Environment	1–4	Vitruvian Planning provided recommendations to the city of Caldwell through a Complete Streets evaluation and updated Caldwell's bike and pedestrian plan.
 Tobacco Prevention	1–4	The Tobacco 21 Coalition advocated and lobbied for Tobacco 21, a statewide tobacco tax increase, and e-cigarette legislation at the state and local levels. Media coverage of their work reached up to 8,500 people. The Idaho legislature passed a vaping parity and retailer licensing bill in March 2020.
 Breastfeeding	2–3	The Idaho Breastfeeding Coalition and Mosaic Advisors used grassroots advocacy, lobbying, and communications to successfully advocate for legislation to exempt breastfeeding mothers from indecent exposure law. Idaho passed the legislation during the spring 2018 session.
 Coalition Development	2–4	Promise Partnerships supported strategic planning and capacity-building for the Caldwell Health Coalition. United Way of Treasure Valley and Saint Alphonsus provided key resources and expertise to help launch the Western Idaho Community Health Collaborative (WICHHC) in July 2019.



Public School Wellness

Over the four years of TCI, this work included a combination of needs assessments, direct supports to implement evidence-based practices, and efforts to promote improvements in district-level wellness policies:

- The Initiative for Healthy Schools at Boise State University used the WellSAT tool to objectively code the local wellness policies in the Caldwell, Nampa, and Boise school districts, and worked with district leadership on how to revise and strengthen their wellness policies.
- In the Boise School District, a community of practice was implemented for physical education teachers. Teachers reported more active PE classes, increased parent/family engagement for physical activity, and increased classroom-based physical activity.
- In Year 2, the TCI team successfully worked with Caldwell schools to ensure they were compliant with Smart Snacks Standards and had implemented at least three components of a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP).²
- The Caldwell Whole Child Initiative provided training and technical assistance to school teams focused on whole-child supports integrated within the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)³ framework. Ten schools are implementing the framework.
- Vitruvian Planning developed an active transportation plan for all 10 Caldwell schools by collecting parent surveys, observations, a community walk audit, active transit data, and siting data. The team surveyed 782 parents at seven schools across two districts in the city of Caldwell. The city used the recommendations to secure \$250,000 in state grant funds to update the sidewalks and bike lanes at a school.

Evidence-Based Programs

Smart Snacks in School are national nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold outside of the federal reimbursable school meal programs during the school day.¹

Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program is a multicomponent approach by which school districts and schools use all opportunities for students to be physically active, meet the nationally recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day, and develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be physically active for a lifetime.²

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports seeks to reduce or eliminate poor behavior schoolwide through the encouragement of positive behaviors and creating an improved school climate.³

Community schools are both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. They integrate a focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement.⁴



Community Schools

United Way of Treasure Valley led a successful pilot of the community schools model at one elementary school and convened a Community School Learning Community, which contributed to the rapid regional adoption and scale-up of the strategy by providing technical assistance, resources, and thought leadership. Additionally, United Way hosted several local and statewide trainings in partnership with the National Community Schools Coalition and Idaho State Department of Education to train school staff, administrators, and community-based organizations how to adopt and adapt a community school model in their respective districts. Twenty-five schools across the state have adopted the model.

- Community schools coordinators worked to address acute gaps in basic needs, such as food, housing, and clothing, and many schools addressed complex ongoing community challenges such as mental health, trauma, and poverty.

- Partners indicate that the program increased coordination with service providers, educational attainment, and the financial stability of the students and families. The community schools helped to connect and build relationships between residents and city officials.

"The impact of the community school resource coordinator and the implementation of the community school model in my school and community has been outstanding. It has radically changed the outcomes for kids, families, and the school."

- Reports from the schools show increased student and family confidence in asking for basic supports, and teachers show more understanding of student needs outside the classroom.
- In Year 4, TCI funds supported partners to develop the Idaho Community School Coalition, a formal collaboration between the State Department of Education, RISE (formerly Treasure Valley Educational Partnership), and UWTV to spread and support the community school strategy in Idaho.



Early Childhood Education

Early in TCI the program director and Saint Alphonsus explored improving nutrition policies and training in early education, but they identified a need to address more general early childhood and preschool education advocacy. Idaho was one of few states to not accept federal funding for pre-K. TCI provided financial support during 2019 for the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children to lobby for a policy change that would allow Idaho to accept federal funding and allocate state budgetary resources to support early education. When legislation did not pass, TCI partners worked with stakeholders to restructure and create a new coalition to work on advocacy and programs. The coalition gained the new governor’s support to apply for and receive a federal Preschool Development Grant. With this grant, a broad group of partners are conducting a needs and resources assessment. In the future, the state will be eligible to apply for program implementation funding.



Built Environment

Promise Partnership contracted with Vitruvian Planning to lead efforts in improving the built environment of Caldwell, Idaho. Vitruvian Planning worked closely and in partnership with city staff including planners, engineers, and communications personnel to engage community members, school districts, local government officials, and organizations to contribute to plans and assessments:

"[Vitruvian Planning] was able to get with the engineers, the planning and zoning folks. ... And we changed actual city policy. ... [I]t literally changed the way that the city of Caldwell designed the streets, the things they require of new developments."

- In Year 1, the first Caldwell Health Conditions Assessment was completed to identify neighborhood-level health conditions and the social influencers of health impacts through quantitative and qualitative data-gathering. The report was shared with municipal and community leaders and has been the planning template for the Caldwell Health Coalition.
- The city of Caldwell adopted the local street design guidelines that were recommended by the Caldwell Complete Streets evaluation. The Caldwell comprehensive plan was adopted in 2018.
- In year 4, TCI worked to update the city of Caldwell’s bicycle and pedestrian plan through public meetings, site evaluation, research, and input from the city. The report will be completed in fall 2020.



Tobacco

The Tobacco 21 Coalition adapted and pivoted their work throughout the grant. After attempting to introduce Tobacco 21 legislation in 2018 and meeting strong opposition that defeated the bill, the group pivoted to address e-cigarettes and vaping regulations. This broadened the coalition's scope, allowing for more partnerships and relationships, adding school district partners, law-enforcement with school resource officers, health departments, medical and dental associations, as well as youth engagement:

"The most significant achievements of TCI have been policy changes, namely adoption of a few important changes in city policy around built environment of Caldwell, and statewide policy changes for breastfeeding and e-cigarettes being included in the definition of tobacco products. These are lasting and will have ongoing impacts."

- State Tobacco 21 efforts included presenting testimony at the Tobacco 21 legislation hearing, educational outreach, a social media campaign, press conferences, and lobby days.
- The coalition trained youth leaders to educate legislators about the risks and implications of vaping. The coalition also spoke to the Idaho School Boards Association about the dangers of vaping in schools and brought in a national vaping expert to conduct a legislative forum for policymaker and community partners.
- TCI support helped the coalition successfully introduce and influence passage of a vape-parity bill establishing e-cigarettes as a tobacco product and requiring them to be regulated and taxed as such and establishing a retailer licensing system for e-cigarette retailers.



Breastfeeding

The TCI work involved leading efforts to pass legislation in Idaho to exempt breastfeeding mothers from indecent exposure law, setting the stage for the existing Idaho Breastfeeding Coalition to continue their work toward social norm changes. With TCI involvement in the coalition, the group was able to leverage expertise from Mosaic Advisors to lead lobbying and expand grassroots support and participation. Community engagement tactics included grassroots advocacy, lobbying, and communications. The legislation passed in spring 2018.



Coalition Development

- The Caldwell Health Coalition (CHC), with capacity-building support from the TCI program director and Saint Alphonsus, established a vision and mission that addresses health equity in Caldwell through six health initiatives. TCI resources informed the work of the CHC, including the updated 2020 Community Needs Assessment, Caldwell Healthy Conditions Assessment, Safe Routes to School outreach, school Activity Connection plans, and soon the updated bike/ped plan. The coalition has begun to look at food security issues in the community, and youth members of the coalition have been involved in tobacco policy work and education.

- Established in July 2019, the Western Idaho Community Health Collaborative (WICHHC) — whose footprint includes all of the Treasure Valley’s 10 counties — is working to cultivate multisector partnerships, set up a community fund, and begin to address the social influencers of health. The program director and Saint Alphonsus have participated at all levels of organizing and steering the formation of the WICHHC, sitting on the funding council, executive committee, data workgroup, and the collaborative in general.

COVID-19

“I think the collaborative partnerships that we had already been engaging in over the previous three and a half years really positioned us well to be able to respond and to respond quickly [to COVID-19].”

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the focus and work of many partners as their organizations and the community had to begin to address the illnesses, the quarantine, the immediate impact on supply chains, and the economic pressures community members were facing. TCI work and technical assistance to schools transitioned online for PBIS and community schools. School wellness leads shared resources for staying connected with students while teaching online, supported basic needs efforts such as expanding work to address food insecurity, connected community school resource coordinators and principals with food banks, issued small grants, and developed other partnerships to step in and fill the gaps that families were experiencing. TCI funds were reallocated to support child care centers in surviving COVID closures and reopenings, to local school districts to address food insecurity and the transition to online learning, and to the Idaho Foodbank to supplement and support their local school pantries. The UWTV, in part due to its experience in partnering with health agencies through the course of TCI, was perfectly positioned to coordinate personal protective equipment donations and distributions in the early days of COVID. Promise Partnership was able to raise an additional \$367,580 in match contributions derived from 60% cash and 40% in-kind contributions of personal protective equipment and supplies to further support the community response to the global pandemic.

Key Insights from TCI

“[B]uilding those relationships and spending some money and some time and some political capital in those communities has built relationships that now help us in a number of ways.”

Promise Partnership’s work throughout the course of TCI pivoted and grew in new directions with a focus on addressing community needs, leveraging relationships, and making the most of opportunities. This work illuminated the benefit of staying flexible while working on policy change, the importance of small-scale policy and practice changes, and the value of collaborative work. Promise Partnership also found that focusing more on depth than breadth in their project helped to make the work successful:

- While pursuing policy changes around Tobacco 21 and school readiness, the tobacco coalition found that it was key to stay flexible and to explore many different options. After hitting a block in Tobacco 21 legislation, the coalition pivoted and worked to successfully pass e-cigarette parity legislation.
- By shifting from a focus on district-level policy work to smaller-scale policy and practice changes, TCI partners were able to help schools to implement school-level practice and policy changes. In the Caldwell district, the Whole Child Initiative is expanding and gaining traction districtwide.
- One of the most important lessons learned — or, rather, confirmed — is how crucial it is to work together rather than individually. For community schools, the collaborations with the State Department of Education, other nonprofits, and service providers have allowed the community schools movement to spread across the state. The use of TCI dollars to support a demonstration

project (Sacajawea Elementary) as well as a broader mechanism for scaling (learning community and new statewide coalition) has had maximum effectiveness in helping to scale up.

- For transformational impact, the maximum outcomes seem to be yielded by investing in a community and picking a few strategies that meet priority needs of that community. Promise Partnerships found that narrowing their geographic footprint and reducing the number of strategies allowed them to build deep, trusting relationships with the community and to provide enough resources to make a difference.
- The capacity-building funded by TCI enhanced partner advocacy skills and helped both health and nonhealth partners to think at the systems level and understand social influencers of health. Partners will be able to use these skills and shared understanding going forward.

Looking Ahead

For the Promise Partners, the TCI work on collaborative principles, relationship building, and collective impact will have a lasting effect and influence. There are connections among nonprofits, hospitals, health districts, the State Department of Education, higher education, and other partners that did not exist five years ago. For many of the strategies, the activities are now in the hands of those trained, educated, and informed by the work TCI produced:

- WICHHC, the newly formed regional community health collaborative, will continue the tenets of community-based solutions, collective impact, and PSE work and provide a structure for partners to scale and spread the TCI work to other communities within the Treasure Valley. In this way, the TCI work will be scaled to other communities in the Treasure Valley.
- The Treasure Valley 2020 Community Assessment was published in June 2020 and will help to inform transformation efforts with partners across sectors for the next three years.
- Tobacco policy reform efforts have secured a home within the Tobacco Free Idaho Alliance, and partners remain committed to preventing youth initiation.
- UWTV continues to seek funding for community schools support through grants and corporate support and is committed to gradually blending funding for the community school coordinator with school funds and supporting the spread of the model within the Caldwell School District.
- With the establishment of the Idaho Community School Coalition, the workload to increase the utilization and implementation of the community school strategy is spread across multiple agencies and partnerships, allowing for a collective lift to ensure the strategy continues to have support across the state.

Endnotes

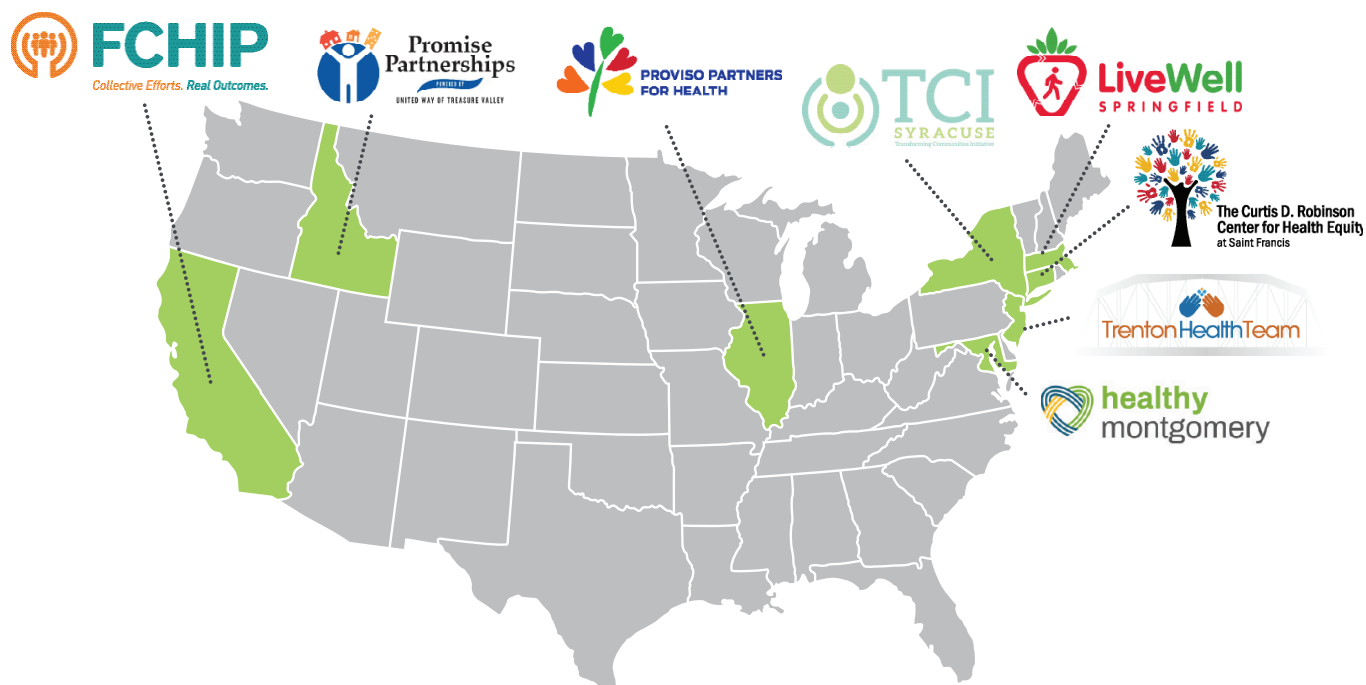
¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019, May 29). Smart Snacks. www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/smartsnacks.htm

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018, August 27). Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools. www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/professional_development/e-learning/CSPAP/index.html

³ PBIS Rewards. (2019, April 2). What is PBIS? www.pbisrewards.com/blog/what-is-pbis/

⁴ Coalition for Community Schools. What is a Community School? Accessed November 12, 2020 from www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what_is_a_community_school.aspx

About the Transforming Communities Initiative



Trinity Health launched the Transforming Communities Initiative (TCI) in 2016 to provide grant funding and technical assistance to hospital-community partnerships. Between July 2016 and June 2020, these partnerships worked on a range of initiatives including tobacco prevention and reduction, public school wellness, early care centers' policies and practices, community food access and nutrition, built environment policies and infrastructure to improve walkability and safety (Complete Streets), breastfeeding policies, and economic development. Partnerships also built community capacity and strengthened local coalitions.

TCI technical assistance was provided by [ChangeLab Solutions](#), [Community Catalyst](#), [Public Good Projects](#), [Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids](#), and the [Georgia Health Policy Center \(GHPC\)](#).

GHPC — in close collaboration with local evaluators — conducted the TCI cross-site evaluation to assess partnership development and collaboration, as well as policy, systems, and environmental change reach, implementation, and impact. Data sources included key stakeholder interviews, TCI partner collaboration surveys, and project documents including site annual reports, meeting notes, site visits, and observations. Quotations in this profile are from stakeholder interviews and partner surveys.