

What Works for Health Shortcut

Evidence matters. Choosing policies and programs that have been shown to work in real life and that are a good fit for your community can improve health and equity.

But where do you start? What Works for Health is a tool to help you find evidence-informed policies, programs, systems, and environmental changes that can make a difference locally.



Step 1: Get Ready

Without focus, all problems can feel equally important, and searching for strategies can be overwhelming. Before you start, think about what you want to accomplish in your community.

Ask questions like:

- Is there a specific health issue or health disparity that is a concern?
- Are there groups of residents with worse outcomes than others?
- What do we hope to achieve?



Step 2: Search for Strategies

Go to What Works for Health: countyhealthrankings.org/whatworks

If you have a specific health concern (e.g., obesity, mental health, suicide) or strategy (e.g. Telemedicine, Living wage laws, School breakfast programs) in mind, use the keyword search. You can also find strategies by topic (e.g., Tobacco Use or Community Safety).



Step 3: Fine-tune Your Search

Look at your list of strategies. Are there ideas that make sense for your community? You might need new search terms—synonyms, related words, or root causes.

Is your list too long? You can narrow by topic, approach, decision maker, or evidence rating on the left side of the screen.



Step 4: Explore Strategies

Clicking on a strategy title takes you to more information about the strategy and how likely it is to work. You'll also find examples of the strategy in action, links to studies, and implementation resources. Check out related strategies at the bottom of the screen. These may also be of interest. You can save, email, or print potential strategies for your community to review.



Step 5: Prepare to Select a Strategy

Think carefully about what you found. Ask questions like: Does the strategy work? Will it work here?

Remember:

- Evidence ratings show the likelihood a strategy will work, based on best available evidence; expected beneficial outcomes show for which outcomes. Confirm these outcomes matter to you.
- Disparity ratings indicate likely effects on disparities or gaps in expected outcomes or health equity.
- Reading the evidence of effectiveness summary can help you know if a strategy is likely to work locally—do you see populations like yours? Communities like yours?
- Implementation examples include toolkits, model language, and illustrations of how communities have put a strategy into action.

Bring your partners together and get started.