

2017-2019

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION GRANTS



**ENGAGE
TRANSFORM
IMPACT**



SUSTAINABLE CHANGE



COMMUNITIES:
BONNERS FERRY
REXBURG
SANDPOINT

**TOTAL
AWARDED:**
\$750,000



**LEVERAGED
FUNDS**
for programs & projects:
\$3 million

DRIVING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE IN IDAHO

The Community Transformation Grants awarded by the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health are designed to do just that – transform communities.

The transformation goes beyond the many physical projects and systems changes that were funded by these \$250,000 grants. During the past three years, we've seen increased awareness of childhood obesity in the communities of Bonners Ferry, Rexburg and Sandpoint and a strong desire to make these communities healthier.

We've also seen dynamic partnerships form with the goal of creating sustainable change, and these partnerships and the relationships created will live on long after these grants ended.

Launched under our High Five initiative that promotes physical activity and access to healthy foods for youth, the story of these Community Transformation Grants continues. Our hope is that this report provides insights on how committing to collaboration and innovation can lead to outcomes that change communities and change lives.

In good health,



K. Witt-Doyle

Kendra Witt-Doyle, PhD, MPH

**Executive Director,
Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health**

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION GRANT?

Each Community Transformation Grant provides \$250,000 in funding and technical support for Idaho communities. The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health provides innovative, technical expertise that brings communities together and encourages healthy, active lifestyles.

NATIONAL CRISIS. LOCAL CHALLENGES.

Throughout the country, nearly 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese, placing them at higher risk for serious health issues such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

Recent data shows these rates are just as high in communities all across Idaho.

Multiple factors contribute to this trend. Some communities didn't have easy access to affordable, healthy foods. Others didn't have the infrastructure to support active lifestyles, such as walkable streets, playground equipment or exercise programs.

Each community faces its own set of unique challenges with no simple answer. As the state's leading health foundation, the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health knew it had to do something.

ANSWERING A NEED

In 2013, the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health launched its High Five Initiative. It's a community collaborative that combines the knowledge and resources of city leaders, schools, businesses and other partners all to achieve one goal: increase access to healthy foods and physical activity.



1 in 3

Number of Idaho children that are overweight or obese.



THE PROCESS

From the selection process to the technical expertise provided, the Foundation has designed CTG to be a truly innovative philanthropic model.

The communities selected for a CTG follow a three-phase process:

ENGAGE Start the conversation.

Every CTG begins with a community assessment to identify local challenges, resources and opportunities. The goal is to get a true understanding of the community.

TRANSFORM Establish trust and build a team.

The Foundation works within the community to develop a team of “health champions” that includes government officials, business owners, industry groups, schools and concerned citizens. The Foundation refers to this group as the impact team.

IMPACT Develop a plan and make it a reality.

Together, the impact team creates a detailed community action plan for the grant. The community can leverage a range of funding, technical assistance and community resources to make these plans a reality.



Each Community Transformation Grant is a **THREE-YEAR COLLABORATIVE PROCESS** tailored to each community.



2016

JUNE 23

Grant applications open

AUGUST 1

Applications and video submission due

AUGUST 8

Finalists announced

SEPTEMBER 12-23

Site visits to finalist communities

OCTOBER 4

Grant recipients announced

2017

JANUARY

Community Transformation Grant begins

2018

MAY

Community Action Plans created by impact teams

MAY-DECEMBER

Grant implementation

2019

JANUARY-DECEMBER

Grant implementation



WHAT WE LEARNED

Since launching the CTG program in 2013, we've learned what it takes to drive transformational change. These insights have been invaluable to the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health, especially as an Idaho-focused nonprofit.

IT'S MORE THAN THE MONEY



The Foundation never wanted to be “just funding.” That’s reflected in every part of this program — from the way we select our recipients to the way we leverage outside resources. To truly transform a community, philanthropists can’t simply hand money over to city leaders and say, “Make something happen.” Sustainable change has to start with transforming mindsets, educating leaders and developing strong partnerships within a community.

EVERY COMMUNITY IS UNIQUE



We can’t prescribe our own solutions to our grant recipients. Every city the Foundation has worked with has its own set of challenges and opportunities. When we give our communities the chance to take ownership of the grant and its resources, we can help create practical solutions that actually work.

CHANGE NEEDS CHAMPIONS



The Foundation identified “health champions” early on in the process. These are highly motivated individuals who brought the muscle and energy to rally their community. Some of them worked from within the city government, but many are often concerned citizens. Developing health champions helped the Foundation focus on guiding community leaders rather than directing them.



IMPACT BY COMMUNITY

B O N N E R S F E R R Y | R E X B U R G | S A N D P O I N T

BONNERS FERRY



POPULATION:

2,603

MEDIAN INCOME:

\$30,971*

ABOUT:

Bonnors Ferry is located at the tip of the northern Idaho panhandle, just over 25 miles from the Canadian border. Surrounded by picturesque mountains and dense alpine forests, the town is a gateway to Idaho's rugged wilderness.

*datausa.io 2017

Inspiring a New Mindset

For Bonners Ferry, transformation didn't start with physical programs, projects or policies — it started with a significant shift in the city's mindset.

"We were so used to thinking 'We're just Bonners Ferry,'" says Lisa Ailport, the city administrator. "Now we say, 'We are Bonners Ferry,' and are looking for ways to make our community a better place."

"The grant helped change the city's mindset on leveraging grant money. Working as a team we strengthen our relationship with other foundations and funding agencies to help carry our projects and impacts more deeply in the community."

LISA AILPORT
City Administrator

That all-new mindset kickstarted a drive within the city to get the most out of the Community Transformation Grant. Bonners Ferry leveraged an additional \$209,000 in funds that helped complete 24 projects. All of them promoted access to physical activity and healthy, affordable food.

The projects ranged from large to small, from extremely visible to policy and planning that will continue to impact the city for years to come. The city refurbished the municipal pool, added a skating rink to the fairgrounds, constructed a walking path behind the high school and created Little Free Gardens throughout the city, where residents can pick fresh fruits and vegetables.

All of these projects were hand-picked and designed by a dedicated group of community leaders and health champions that formed the CTG impact team.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT — TRANSFORMING A REGION

But the impact of the Community Transformation Grant didn't stop at the city limits.

"We were thinking community in a larger sense, not just the city, but the whole county," says David Sims, the former mayor of Bonners Ferry.

Thanks to the grant, the first-ever public playground in the neighboring community Moyie Springs is under construction. Prior to this, parents had to drive their children seven miles to the nearest playground.

Less than 10 miles away in the small community of Naples, local children will soon be playing with new goals on the municipal soccer field and a portable dodgeball area. Before, the area had little to no facilities for children to play and stay active.

After seeing the effects of the Community Transformation Grant not only impact his city but the entire county, Sims says he's a true believer in transformational change.

"Now that we're through it, I do see how it really changes the thinking and mindset of the community. I think it did for the city staff and the other organizations who were involved, too."

DAVID SIMS
Former Mayor of Bonners Ferry



Photo credit: Bonners Ferry Herald



Photo credit: Bonners Ferry Herald

THE IMPACT:

The CTG fully funded or “seed” funded several projects in Bonners Ferry, including:

MUNICIPAL POOL RENOVATION

- Municipal pool was decades old and unable to pass safety inspections
- Repairs allowed the pool to pass inspections and re-open to the public
- Affordable, fun activity for children and families in the summer
- Offers affordable swimming lessons, low rates, open swim times, family swim times and adult lap swim times

SKATING RINK

- New synthetic-surfaced skating rink added to the Boundary County Fairgrounds
- Keeps children and families active in the winter
- Completely free physical activity
- Rental skates available at affordable rates from a local outfitter

LITTLE FREE GARDENS

- Produce gardens installed throughout town
- Residents can pick free fruits and vegetables
- Provides fresh produce to local families and children who need it
- Teaches children the importance of healthy eating and where their food comes from

TRAILS PLAN

- New walking and running path developed in the woods behind the high school
- Plan to construct a network of biking and pedestrian paths throughout the city
- Provides safe transportation for those without cars
- Makes the city more walkable, encouraging more residents to stay active



REXBURG



POPULATION:
28,337

MEDIAN INCOME:
\$26,341*

ABOUT:

Located about 80 miles from Yellowstone National Park, Rexburg is a chosen place for families to settle in Eastern Idaho. The city is also home to Brigham Young University-Idaho, where 51 percent of the student population is married by graduation.

*datausa.io 2017

Keeping Kids Active All-Year Round

Rexburg's population is one of the youngest in America, with a median age of only 23 years old.

But with a citywide poverty rate of 43 percent, many of those younger families aren't able to afford additional programs or childcare to keep their children active and learning — especially during the long winter months.

"When it was finished, we could all take a step back and say, 'Look at what we achieved together.'"

DANIEL TORRES
Assistant Economic Developer

"If you wanted to take your 3-year-old somewhere they could be active during the winter, you were basically stuck going to the indoor playgrounds at fast food restaurants," says Daniel Torres, Rexburg's assistant economic developer, and a local parent himself.

When the Foundation awarded Rexburg with \$250,000 worth of funding and technical assistance, Torres and the town knew exactly where they should be used. Through the grant process, the city transformed an empty industrial space into an interactive children's learning center — Kidsburg.

WORKING TOGETHER

Torres went to three different BYU-Idaho classes to start forming the idea. A public relations class helped draft the name and marketing plans, while two graphic design classes designed the look and feel of the space.

With the students' plans in hand, Torres went to local contractors and businesses to turn the community's idea into a reality. With the help of healthy partnerships, the city was able to build frames for the exhibits, refinish the floors, paint the walls and fill the exhibits with supplies.

All along the way, Torres and the city worked heavily with the High Five Committee, school board members, leaders from surrounding communities and the citizens of Rexburg. Without these community partnerships, Torres says Kidsburg would not have become a reality.

"To make a project like this work, it has to be owned and advocated for by the community," Torres says. "We did it all because of them and what they asked for."

When the city opened Kidsburg on Halloween in 2018 with a carnival, 5,000 local families walked through the center and purchased nearly \$4,000 in prepaid passes for their children.

Kidsburg admission is \$4 per child, and parents are admitted for free. There are weekly activities scheduled that have been a big hit. Today, Torres says you can routinely find 30-40 children and parents at Kidsburg, learning and playing together. The exhibits promote healthy eating, active lifestyles, science, math and more.

"We've learned that if people are given the opportunity to be healthy and active, they'll choose to do it," Torres says.

"My almost 2-year-old absolutely loved it! We've been going stir crazy the last couple weeks and this place was amazing! Thank you for making something like this in Rexburg! It was badly needed!!"

PARENT
Rexburg, Idaho



THE IMPACT:

The CTG fully funded or “seed” funded several projects in Rexburg, including:

KIDSBURG

- Interactive children’s play center open during winter months
- Partnerships with local businesses, the school district, Brigham Young University-Idaho
- Cheap admission for children and free admission for parents

NEW PARKS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- City of Rexburg plans to build new parks, redevelop old parks and connect trail systems through town over the next 10 years
- Part of an initiative to increase opportunities for healthy outdoor exercise
- Targeted to help alleviate the effects of mental distress for residents

WINTER PARK

- City converted Teton Lakes Golf Course into a seasonal winter activities park
- Cross-country skis and toboggan rentals available for children and adults
- Averages more than 288 rentals a week during the snow season



SANDPOINT



POPULATION:
8,703

MEDIAN INCOME:
\$41,385*

ABOUT:

Sandpoint is home to Lake Pend Oreille, the largest lake in Idaho, and Schweitzer Mountain Resort.

At 2,900 acres, Schweitzer is one of the largest ski resorts in the Pacific Northwest.

*2018 Census

In This Together

Located in Northern Idaho, Sandpoint is a hub for outdoor recreation. Famous ski destination Schweitzer Mountain Resort and the 148-square-mile Lake Pend Oreille are just minutes from town.

But despite the nearby outdoor recreation opportunities and a growing foodie culture, Sandpoint's residents still struggle to maintain a healthy, active lifestyle. The median income here is still \$41,385, leaving many families unable to access the world-class recreation opportunities in town.

"We're generally a very health-oriented town with a strong outdoor sports community," says Shelby Rognstad, mayor of Sandpoint. "But not all families are able to be a part of that."

After conducting community surveys using funds leveraged from both the Foundation and the YMCA, Rognstad knew Sandpoint residents really wanted two things: easier access to healthy foods and more affordable recreation opportunities in the winter.

But the big question was, how? He turned to his citizens to find out.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Rognstad and the CTG impact team created a request for proposals process, asking the community what should be done to develop better access to healthy foods.

He was shocked by the response. In just five weeks, seven different proposals poured in from local nonprofits, schools and faith groups all over town. When the groups came together to present their ideas before Rognstad's panel, something even more unexpected happened.

"There was just this synergy in the room," Rognstad says. "Rather than competing for the best idea, these groups joined together to brainstorm even bigger and better ideas."

For starters, Rognstad and the impact team gave out 10 awards to the variety of ideas that the groups developed together.

Several community gardens were built near schools, libraries and churches throughout town. A local nonprofit now teaches free cooking classes to local children and offers free grocery pick-up at a handful of locations. Healthy snacks are being handed out to children taking after school music classes.

The Kaniksu Land Trust partnered with the Sandpoint Nordic Club to build an outdoor recreation center and winter sports program at its Pine Street Woods property that include cross-country ski equipment and snowshoes available at no cost for organized outings at the recreation center.

The CTG made several new community programs possible. But the most rewarding part for Rognstad? Seeing his community take action.

"Making this a community-driven project was the best part of the Community Transformation Grant," Rognstad says. "We learned that the key to any change is engaging with our community."

"We got to see our community come together, engage with each other and come up with solutions we couldn't have come up with on our own. It was pure synergy."

SHELBY ROGNSTAD
Sandpoint Mayor

"We saw the opportunity to improve the health of our youth through this grant and really catalyze some efforts, and recatalyze some efforts that had been going on. It's been fun and it's brought a lot of energy to the community."

AARON QUALLS
Planning & Economic Development
Director for Sandpoint



THE IMPACT:

The CTG funded several projects in Sandpoint, including:

COMMUNITY GARDENS

- Located near schools, a public library and a local church
- Teaches kids how to garden and the importance of eating whole fruits and vegetables

FOOD PANTRY

- Partnership with 7B Culinary Connections, a local nonprofit specializing in culinary education
- Free cooking classes available for kids and families
- Grocery pick-up locations near schools and in Downtown Sandpoint

MUSIC CLASS SNACK PROGRAM

- Partnership with Kaniksu Land Trust and the Music Conservatory of Sandpoint
- Healthy snacks are offered during after school music classes

PINE STREET WOODS & NORDIC RECREATION CENTER

- Partnership with regional conservation nonprofit Kaniksu Land Trust
- Outdoor recreation center that houses a winter sports program including cross-country ski equipment and snowshoes available to rent for free for organized outings at the recreation center

SELKIRK OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP EDUCATION CENTER

- Located at Schweitzer Mountain Resort
- SOLE (Selkirk Outdoor Leadership Education) constructed a yurt that provides learning space for outdoor education programs
- Affordable access for school groups and underserved youth for outdoor education and physical activity





MENTAL MODELS

50%

change among city officials that they believe that society and environment influences health, along with individual behaviors



POLICIES

80%

agreed that CTG contributed to policy changes related to childhood obesity since the grant ended



PRACTICES

78%

agreed that since CTG they are making more changes to organizational practices to promote youth healthy eating and physical activity

THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

For nearly two decades, the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health has worked to improve health in Idaho. With every initiative, we learn, adapt and improve – and the High Five Community Transformation Grants are no different.

To measure our progress, we commissioned FSG, a nonprofit consulting firm, to survey members of CTG communities who participated in the CTG process. The responses would help them assess the six conditions required for systems change.

THE ULTIMATE RESULT?

The CTG process helped every community move the needle in these six conditions.

- **Mental models within the community shifted to more support community-focused efforts to address the root causes of childhood obesity – physical activity and access to healthy foods.**
- **People with positional power were moved to use influence and authority to address childhood obesity. Organizations involved in the Community Transformation Grant changed practices to better support healthy eating and active living.**
- **The grant strengthened relationships between individuals and organizations.**
- **The process influenced local city and school policies to better support physical activity and healthy eating.**
- **The funding that is part of the grant had a catalytic effect, helping communities attract other private and public resources.**

The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health’s ultimate goal is always transformational change. With every grant, we’re transforming communities to become healthier and more active for years to come.

TO TRACK PROGRESS

Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health conducted a final evaluation survey with key stakeholders in each community.



WHAT IMPACT TEAM MEMBERS FROM CTG COMMUNITIES SAID ABOUT THE GRANT:



"I think it was the ability to have access to funding to begin programs that enabled continuation long past the grant. It gave us time to implement programs, see if they were going to work, and then engage with our council and our mayor to continue funding."



"A pleasant surprise for all of us was that these groups ended up getting together after that experience because again, they were often not aware of each other, and what they were working on and that they had a common interest and real potential for collaboration. A lot of those groups that were submitting ended up partnering together and having I think a far greater impact and a more sustainable one than they would've had otherwise."



"The Blue Cross High Five! was a huge catalyst in even getting the community going all in the same direction... it established a base [from various organizations] to get together, figure out what's best for the community, figure out who's going to take the lead on it, and then move forward."

ABOUT THE BLUE CROSS OF IDAHO FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH

The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health, Inc., is a nonprofit charitable foundation established in 2001 by Blue Cross of Idaho. The Foundation works statewide to improve the health of all Idahoans.



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