



Marin County Communities of Excellence of Excellence Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention (CX³) Project

**Our neighborhood.
Our rules.**



What is the Communities of Excellence Project (CX³)?

Communities of Excellence in Nutrition¹, Physical Activity² and Obesity Prevention³ (i.e., CX³) is a program planning framework that involves taking an in-depth look at communities (*Assessment*) in order to identify areas influencing healthy eating and active living that may be in need of improvement.

CX³ answers the following questions:
What does a “healthy community” look like?
How does our community measure up? Is our community a healthy place to be? It provides tools such as indicators, benchmarks and GIS mapping programs in order to do this.

Because the community itself has a critical role to play in preventing obesity, CX³ engages the community to examine its neighborhoods in relation to a variety of obesity prevention *benchmarks* referred to as community *indicators and assets*. CX³ indicators are designed to look at the norms and conditions within a community. They are grouped into nine community environments: Neighborhood, Early Childhood, Schools, After-schools, Worksites, Public Sector/Government, and Health Care [For Marin, two other environments have been added-Senior Care, and Agriculture/Food Systems].

Within these environments, CX³ looks at the following *indicators and assets* in order to set standards of “excellence”:

- Percent of population living in poverty*
- # of schools, parks and playgrounds
- # of farmer’s markets
- #food banks/emergency food sources
- # of supermarkets/large grocery stores, small markets and other stores
- # of convenience stores
- # of fast food outlets
- Ratio of fast food outlets to population,
- Ratio of unhealthy to healthy food sources
- Advertising
- Accessibility, i.e., transportation, walkability, etc.

* Low income = ≤ 185% FPL (based on USDA CalFresh Guidelines)



Community Assets look at a community's readiness to change. They are grouped into three categories: Local Health Department Infrastructure, Political Will, and Community Infrastructure.

The local data compiled in evaluating the indicators and assets is what makes CX³ such a powerful tool for local groups. It provides a "snapshot" in time and shows how selected Marin communities currently "measure up" and where it needs to improve to become a "community of excellence" for its residents.

How does CX³ work?

CX³ was designed by the California Department of Public Health's Network for a Healthy California, for local health departments to use in collaboration with neighborhood coalitions. CX³ follows 4 steps:

1. Compile localized data to evaluate a community's strengths and weaknesses in relation to CX³ indicators and assets.
2. Set priorities based on localized data.
3. Implement strategic, community-focused action plans.
4. Evaluate progress over time.

How was CX³ implemented in Marin?

During 2007, 5 local health departments in California implemented CX³, with more joining in 2008 and 2009. Marin County was one of the health departments that implemented this in 2007.



Pre-intervention "Food Desert"
Canal Area Retail Store 2007

Answering the "So What?" question.

Outcome of CX³ Data collected 2007-2011:

The CX³ data collected provided Marin County with a "snapshot" of the three low income census tracts: Canal, Marin City and the San Rafael Davidson areas. Both the Canal and Marin City were officially assessed as "Food Deserts," i.e., they failed to meet the criteria for access to healthy foods based on:

1. Mapping: using GIS website.
2. On-the-ground field study: this also provides a good sense about the "walkability" of the neighborhood.
3. Informed assets: resources we have to accomplish the desired changes.



Post-intervention "Community of Excellence"
Canal Area Retail Store 2011



Planning meeting with neighborhood groups
Health & Wellness Center, December 2010

Next, the outcome of this assessment was used by Marin's Public Health Department Nutrition Wellness Program in developing a plan consisting of interventions and activities:

1) To provide nutrition wellness education and options to enable residents in our community to make healthier food choices in their neighborhood.

2) To provide funding support for grant applications to improve low income neighborhood environments. One of the first successful efforts was Canal Alliance's application and award of a three year grant in March, 2008 to improve nutrition education outreach via a new Promotores program and to provide economic incentives to Canal residents to provide more healthy food options.

3) To provide baseline data for the Marin Wellness Collaborative in order to re-vamp its Strategic Plan and Leadership Council in 2008-2009. It was also used in identifying leaders on the Council that would represent newly established Neighborhood Environments and readiness to change.

4) To provide baseline data to MCF funded Food System Assessment study in 2010 addressing the present food landscape;

5) To provide baseline data for CX³ project Canal community engagement plan and intervention May 2010-May 2011.



"Community Picnic"
Health & Wellness Center, May 2011



Post Intervention "Product Placement"
Canal Area Retail Store, May 2011



The seed has been planted.

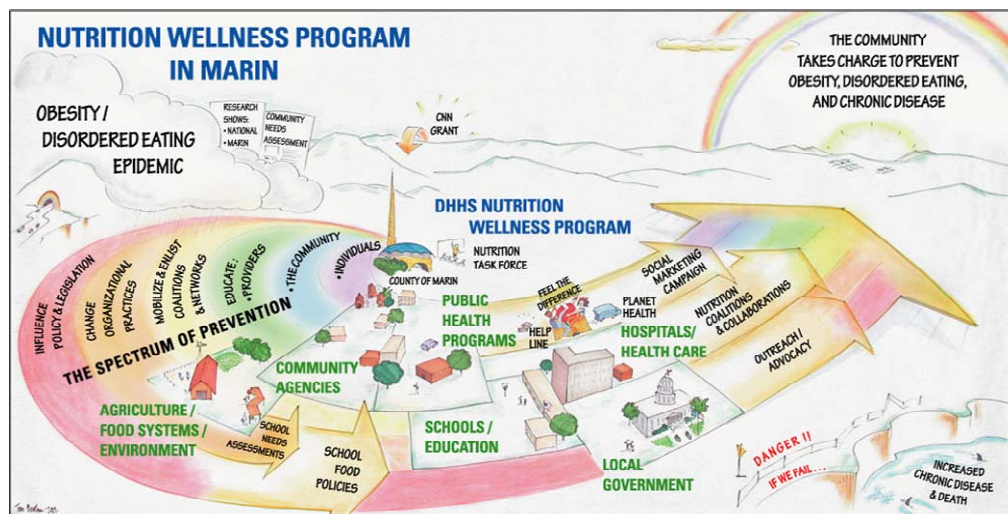
We have seen how CX³ tools can help to identify and frame what a healthy community can look like. We have also seen how the tools can be utilized to view specific elements of what a healthy community should look like...areas that may be lacking or need improvement such as retail food stores, farmers markets, fast food outlets, food banks/emergency food assistance, or walkability and transportation.

And we have seen how a community can go from a “Food Desert” to a “Community of Excellence”.

The challenge will be to sustain and build upon these efforts via a convergence of community efforts to improve the health of our community.

The Marin County Prevention Hub, working with the Marin Wellness Collaborative Leadership Council and its representative community coalitions, can help lead and enable community efforts in developing an updated Countywide Obesity Prevention Plan for Healthy Eating, and Active Living. These efforts can sustain current momentum and tap into community readiness to change the landscape in Marin. Our vision is that all of the many coalitions will join forces and come together for a Healthier Marin.

The Spectrum of Prevention Marin Wellness Collaborative promoting healthy eating/physical activity



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