AMERICA WALKS
Making America a Great Place to Walk

THE WALKING COLLEGE:
A Human Capacity Development Strategy for Growing the National Walking Movement
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DEDICATION

This publication is dedicated to the memory of Fahnya Schorr Bean, a model for aging in place, who embraced walking for her daily trips. It was produced through a donation to America Walks by her beloved husband Donald Bean.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

America Walks also acknowledges the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Public Health Association for their funding support of the Walking College.
Throughout the history of the United States, individuals have come together to advocate for expanding rights and opportunities for more and more Americans. Whether the issue was women’s right to vote, banning segregation or ensuring marriage equality, the commitment and talents of individuals working together have made it happen. The same is true for creating walkable places that are safe, accessible, and available to all. While pedestrian advocates—community activists who work to create these walkable places—are a relatively new phenomenon, a few long-standing community organizations have developed policies, best practices and procedures from a variety of local successes around the country. This information, combined with emerging interests in active transportation and community health, provide a foundation for supporting and educating a new generation of activists and advocates who are focused on building safe, walkable communities for all.

The Walking College curriculum and training process outlined in this report is one of many collective actions needed to support, grow and improve this national walking movement. The beginning of this report outlines research on the state of walking advocacy organizations that led to the idea for a fellowship project. Literature on the benefits of developing human capital further supported the idea, while research on adult learning styles and proven approaches for training advocates helped inform training curriculum and fellowship design. This information is presented in detail in the first two sections of this report.

The third section spells out the learning objectives, curriculum and implementation structure of this program. These were developed to provide a base of knowledge, skills and practices best able to change communities; in addition, the mentoring and peer-to-peer opportunities embedded in the project help fellows cultivate networks and connections for a lifetime of advice.

The final section of the report reports evaluation results from the initial Walking College cohort of 2015. We provide these so that you can judge if our observations, intuitions and reading of the literature resulted in the desired outcomes. We think they did, and we look forward to continued improvements in our training and to expanding our reach. We hope this report will help.
INTRODUCTION

About America Walks

America Walks is a national nonprofit organization leading the way in making America a great place to walk. We do this by empowering and engaging advocates to create safe, convenient and enjoyable places for pedestrians, and promoting walking as a means of getting regular physical activity. With our network of local, state and national partners, America Walks works to prioritize the benefits of walkable communities for policymakers, change agents and advocates making lasting change on the ground. We provide a voice for walking and walkable communities, provide strategy, support, training and technical assistance to state, regional and local organizations, and represent the interests of the walking movement on a wide range of coalitions.

About the Walking Movement

As part of our work to grow and develop the walking movement, America Walks undertook the task of distributing a national survey in 2014 to measure and track the current state of local organizations working on issues of walking and walkability. With over 500 responses, this survey aimed to identify the organizational capacities of local groups and organizations. The survey responses showed the passion and enthusiasm of the walking movement as well as the need for resources, funding and adequate staff. There was an overwhelming sense that the advocates and organizations who responded had a strong desire to be engaged in a national walking movement but needed the channels to do that.

Respondents represented all 50 states and reported working in such fields as promoting physical health, improving community safety, expanding access to walkable spaces, and developing walkable communities. Organizations that participated in the study demonstrated the wide reach of the walking movement despite having limited resources. More than half the organizations had fewer than two full-time staff members, which indicates that the movement relies heavily on volunteers. The median annual budget reported was $7,000. When asked about resources or assistance that could be most effective, respondents rated funding and fund-raising highest; but they also reported a need for communications assistance, including tools for increasing public awareness, connections to networking or partnership opportunities, and training in advocacy.
About Advocacy in the Walking Movement

At America Walks, we have seen the passion, commitment and innovation that comes from individual community advocates working to create lasting change over the course of our 20-year history. The growing walking movement is a result of the individual advocates our organization interacts with on a daily basis. The results of the 2014 survey only further confirmed the importance of these individuals in changing the behavior, culture and built environment of their communities as part of the walking movement.

Community advocates are strategically positioned to have the greatest and most lasting impact on their own surroundings. Despite a lack of resources or funding, the benefits and advantages that come with being immersed in the area they are seeking to change is immeasurable. These advocates have the connections and relationships within their communities to engage and encourage others to act; they include important members of the walking movement, such as transit and health policymakers, transportation planners and local organizations that promote walking, and other critical stakeholders who do not work within the traditional areas of walkability, including leaders of faith-based communities, educators and school officials, and local business owners. Participation from these groups and more helps to institutionalize the change being seen and increases the commitment of the community as a whole.

Individual local advocates also know what needs to be prioritized to encourage walking and walkability in their communities. Any advocate who has worked on the ground has experienced firsthand the challenges and obstacles that their own work will need to overcome. America Walks receives stories, examples and other information from these individuals that would not be available from other sources. They also know the resources currently available and possible areas for growth. Most importantly, local advocates have the personal history and experience that not only drives their work but can also inspire the work of others and serve as powerful testimony to the need for change.

In addition to being resources for their communities, community advocates can also be great assets for national organizations. Advocates at the local level can take national programs, initiatives and resources and apply them to specific contexts.
Oftentimes, this will lead to the growth and future development of the original resources, feeding the work of national organizations such as America Walks. We have seen examples of this with national initiatives such as the Surgeon General’s Call to Action on Walking and Walkable Communities. Local advocates also disseminate information and promote and report on the walking movement at a local and project level. Finally, it is the individual advocate who forms lasting relationships with new advocates for the walking movement, growing the efforts beyond their initial scope.

The remainder of this report will describe, in detail, the process undertaken to create, implement, and evaluate the America Walks Walking College during its inaugural year in 2015.
BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Introduction

To address the gaps identified in the 2014 survey described in the previous section, America Walks began to outline plans to provide additional support to the over 700 local and state organizations within its network through a dedicated training and development program. Out of this came the idea to provide community advocates with tools and training to make change in their communities.

We began with a review of existing research to assess the usefulness of human capital investment in facilitating social change as well as to design successful ways to teach participants. The following terms were used in the search: “human capital development,” “human capital development theory,” “fellowship,” “adult learning,” “adult distance education,” “social change,” and “social movements.”

Much is known about the importance of local advocacy in making policy and social change happen (Anria, 2013; Brigham & Nolan, 2014; Marger, 1984). However, less is known about how to train local advocates to make policy and environmental changes, or what skills or talents make them successful.

Human Capital Development

The original concept behind the Walking College was a human capital development project, to train advocates focused on creating health promoting environments. Human capital, as it is used here, refers to the competencies, education, health, habits, and training of individuals. The concept of human capital recognizes that not all labor is equal and that the quality of employees can be improved by investing in them. The education, experience and abilities of an employee have an economic value for employers and for the economy as a whole.

Investment in human capital and the use of human capital development theory is a growing part of the literature on both economic and social change. Many economists regard expenditures on education, training, medical care, and so on as investments in human capital. It is called human capital because people cannot be separated from their knowledge, skills, health, or values in the way they can be separated from their financial and physical assets.
Channar et al. showed, “Human capital development has strong significant positive relation with satisfaction level of the employees, which will eventually lead to improved organizational performance” (Channar, 2015). Mullin evaluated relationships between human capital and economic development from 1950 to 2000. The results indicated a significant causal relationship from investment in human capital to economic development (Mullin, 2011). Fox & Royle (2014) found that human capital investment is not only an economic driver but is a stronger predictor of innovation than traditional physical goods, and it predicts greater innovation in managerial persons sustained over longer periods of time.

Godwin & Heymann (2015) tie together the development of human capital in economics and a necessary shift in education practices in public health. Public health challenges in the 21st century involve widespread societal change and, in order to address them, these authors believe that public health professionals need to be able to “place their work in a larger social context, understand local and global perspectives on a deeper level, and effectively engage a wide variety of stakeholders.” These authors suggest that in order to develop professionals to address these issues they need to be trained differently than they were previously. Innovative learning strategies allow knowledge to be applied in new ways.

Ndinguri & Machmtes (2012) discuss the fluidity of human learning and the continuous nature of developing human knowledge. The authors acknowledge previous research showing that human capital development boosts economic development, and then give a detailed account of how to strategically use this approach to increase knowledge and innovation.

Fellowships

As a way to invest in individuals and provide resources in a structured way, the Walking College required a process for the program to follow. Human capital development processes often use fellowship programs for professional development. According to the University of California at Berkeley, a fellowship is generally a short-term opportunity lasting up to a few years which focuses on professional development and is sponsored by a specific organization seeking to expand leadership in their field. These programs are designed for a variety of reasons including advancing research, developing new initiatives, and supporting the growth of the fellow (UCB, 2016).
Winston says that the UJIA Ashdown Fellowship, “sought to develop talented and committed people who demonstrated leadership potential.” They recruited people who had the capacity for leadership/management roles but who were not already in them. For this fellowship, key factors for success were “secure funding, a stable board and professional staff, an emphasis on making fellows feel valued, and access to some of the best people within the academic field of leadership and management and within Jewish education” (Winston, 2009).

Another critical aspect of this research is its look at the challenges facing fellowships. By addressing these important challenges, fellowships become increasingly better development tools. Winston says, “A few fellows said that although the fellowship had helped them grow and they felt better equipped as leaders, their work environment was not conducive to change. It is important in future programs that the challenge of resistance to change is more directly addressed and perhaps a way may be found to support those fellows frustrated by their particular environment” (Winston, 2009). In a field like walkability, developing skills to deal with change-resistance may be a key to successful community change.

An article by Matovu et al. describes the benefits of mentorship in fellowship programs. One of the most significant findings here is, “Mentorship is a two-way mutually beneficial learning situation where the mentor provides advice, shares knowledge and experiences, and teaches using a low pressure, self-discovery approach.” The evaluation shows the positive impact of a mentorship program on the level of learning of the fellows as well as the development of the mentors (Matovu, 2011).

Creating and Maintaining Social Change

The goal of the Walking College at its base is not an economic change but a social one and it was important to the Walking College team to understand the keys to creating and maintaining social change in order to integrate them into the Walking College’s process.

In 2015 Tesdahl and Speer published a study of 50 local chapters of a national congregation-based community-organizing federation where they examined longitudinal participation. This study takes what is already known about social movement organizations and expands that knowledge to look at sustained participation and activity of members over time. They found greater levels of
participation when opportunities and resources are equitably distributed to all participants within the organization. This distribution of resources can happen by way of large meetings with staff, or one-on-one meetings with individuals. The groups that held these types of meetings, as well as other resource-sharing events, had better long-term participation in their social movements.

Some social movements, like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) have continued to thrive in changing social and political landscapes. MADD has, arguably, been one of the most successful public-health grassroots citizen advocacy organizations in the United States in the past century. This organization is often given credit for changing attitudes toward and increasing awareness around the consequences of drinking and driving. Since their founding, alcohol-related traffic deaths in the United States have decreased significantly (Fell, 2006). Specifically, within this drinking-and-driving movement, a study was done by McCarthy and Wolfson to look at factors that influence types and amounts of resources collective actors are able to mobilize. They found that measures of agency (the amount of effort activists invest) and organizational structure predict mobilization of volunteers, revenue, and overall membership, leading to the conclusion that improvements in agency can influence outcomes (McCarthy & Wolfson, 1996). This study also found that affiliation with a highly visible national organization, in this case, MADD, energized local leaders. Although specific to the drinking-and-driving movement, these ideas can be taught and modeled for success.

Although engagement and participation of members seems to be a key to the success of MADD, some movements found success in changing how they raise and distribute revenue. In 1984, Marger researched how the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) adapted to social and environmental changes. In the face of a changing social landscape, the NAACP decided that they would maintain their strategy to integrate blacks, while changing their revenue development plan to cultivate ties with other organizations. By doing this, they were able to increase revenue despite a lack of growth in membership. This collaborative creation of new relationships allowed for sustained progress as the social landscape changed.

Adult Learning, Education, and E-learning

An important aspect of the Walking College is its investment in adult learning in order to make social change happen. In order to have the most success in the fellowship program, the Walking College team employed proven strategies for the education of adult students in an online format. Curran has found that a learner-centered approach
is a better fit for adult learning than an approach focused on teachers. At its base, the learner-centered approach includes involving adult learners actively in the learning process because adults focus more on the process and relevance of learning, rather than the content of curriculum. Curran also looked at Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT) and found that learned behavior, positive environment, and cognitive process with one another promote transfer of learning in adults. It was determined, based on the literature, that adults learn best by observing role models, and want control over their learning process in order to increase knowledge transfer (Curran, 2014).

Salyers et. al. review the literature of contemporary e-learning styles and discuss the importance of “scaffolding” for success in this type of learning environment. Scaffolding includes: (1) identifying what the student can do, (2) establishing shared goals, (3) providing ongoing assessment of learning needs, (4) providing individualized assistance, (5) reflecting on activities and identifying what worked well and what requires improvement, and (6) including opportunities to internalize and generalize the learning (Salyers, 2014). This scaffolding process allows for participants in the program to work together in a learning community to cultivate goals and outcomes that are necessary for success. Stewart (2014) also posits that learning together in a professional community is more effective than traditional professional development methods, and that learning communities thrive when all participants are invested in the work they are doing.

Summary

In light of the responses to the 2014 nationwide survey and the importance of local advocacy in the development of social change champions, America Walks created the Walking College. As a national organization committed to making lasting change, we have the resources, knowledge and access to others that is needed to grow training that will assist with local advocacy efforts. The reach and influence of America Walks grows exponentially when we utilize the network of local advocates that are a mainstay of our organization’s capacity.

In order to effectively engage local advocates from across the United States in a dedicated and methodical way, America Walks recognized the need for a concrete, hands-on curriculum guided by staff as well as other experts of the walking movement. The 2014 survey addressed concrete areas of interest and room for improvement by local advocates and organizations, including communications, program development
development and fundraising. The Walking College combines the resources and technical assistance already provided by America Walks with individual teachings that help advocates develop lifelong skills.

Along with the resources and training provided to the chosen local advocates, the program offers participants a unique opportunity to engage with the experts already immersed in the walking movement. This addresses the need for networking and partnerships identified by the initial survey and supported by our subsequent research. The result is a new cadre of passionate and connected walking champions. Along with their expert mentors, fellows are connected to each other, individuals who are doing similar work across the United States. This professional community allows for sharing of challenges, successes and best practices that can possibly be replicated in other parts of the country.

The research explored here informed the creation of the curriculum and implementation protocol, which are explained in-depth, in the following section.
As discussed in the previous section, the Walking College is a human capital development project. Its purpose is to increase the knowledge and improve the skills of local advocates working to create walkable communities and, thereby, grow the national movement. The following summary of a detailed logic model (found in Appendix A) describes the process:

The remainder of this section will discuss the Walking College learning objectives, the way those high-level objectives were organized and expanded to create six content-specific program modules, the design of the instructional methods, and the recruitment of fellows.
Learning Objectives

A planning team of experienced walkable-community advocates was assembled to help develop the learning objectives and curriculum of the Walking College. This advisory team identified the target audience as follows:

Local advocates, working individually or within small organizations, who have a passion for making their communities more walkable, and who are looking for technical assistance in order to become more impactful in their efforts

The chosen local advocates became known as Walking College Fellows, and include volunteer and paid advocates who are planning, transportation, public health and health care professionals, as well as students, teachers/professors, and local elected officials.

The course was designed to nurture the development of both hard and soft skills necessary to become effective community change agents. “Hard skills” include understanding the science behind the benefits of walking, the ability to analyze the built environment, and mastery of the public policy process. “Soft skills” include effective communication, building relationships, and creating trust, in order to foster a local advocacy movement with multiple diverse stakeholders, and engage effectively with decision-makers.

The following learning objectives were developed as educational benchmarks to measure the success of the Walking College. After completing the program, Walking College Fellows should be able to:

1. Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences about the benefits of a walkable community;
2. Recruit and inspire other citizen advocates to join the movement, and establish an organizational structure;
3. Organize public events, programs, and communication campaigns that emphasize the need for improved walkability;
4. Engage professionals in multiple fields, including public health, planning and transportation, on the ways walkability affects their priorities;
5. Navigate the structure of local and state government, and engage elected officials in conversations about walkability;
6. Design and implement effective policy campaigns, such as reducing speed limits or requiring complete streets;
7. Research, understand, and communicate data to support campaigns.
The course curriculum was created with these learning objectives in mind. Six modules, each covering a different area of content, were designed to guide Walking College Fellows through a structured learning experience to grow their capacity to lead and create local walking and walkability campaigns.

After an introductory module on walkability basics, fellows learn how to develop their own leadership skills and build a diverse, local walkable-community movement. The next two modules provide technical content on designing the built environment for walkability and engaging in the public policy process to actually improve the community for walking. The final module focuses on planning and implementing campaigns.

The seven learning objectives were expanded to create “module-specific” objectives that informed the content and resource materials provided in each module. The objectives for each module are as follows:

**Module 1: Why Walking?**
After completing this module, fellows will be able to:
- Discuss why people walk and the history of car-oriented design in the U.S.;
- Identify the cross-cutting co-benefits of walking and walkable communities;
- Explain how walkable communities support disadvantaged people and improve equity;
- Describe the basic elements of Vision Zero (VZ), Safe Routes to School (SRTS), and Complete Streets (CS) campaigns;
- Research, understand, and communicate data to support campaigns;
- Develop the outline of an action plan.

**Module 2: Developing Leadership**
After completing this module, fellows will be able to:
- Describe and practice leadership qualities and conduct self-evaluation;
- Explain and practice cultural competency and explain systemic discrimination/ oppression;
- Engage others, facilitate discussions about walkability, and create a shared vision;
- Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences about the benefits of a walkable community;
- Establish an organizational structure, write winning grant applications, and fund-raise;
- Develop a draft action plan for group/organizational sustainability.
Module 3: Building a Movement
After completing this module, fellows will be able to:
• Communicate effectively and build trusting relationships;
• Specifically, build trusting relationships with equity leaders;
• Recruit and inspire other local advocates to join the movement;
• Organize public events and programs that encourage people to engage in walking;
• Design and implement strategic communication campaigns that emphasize the need for improved walkability;
• Develop a draft action plan for future events, programs, and communications.

Module 4: Designing for People
After completing this module, fellows will be able to:
• Evaluate the built environment and identify features of walkable design;
• Describe the impact of land-use, zoning, place-making, and traffic calming on transportation choices and behaviors;
• Explain pedestrian safety best practices and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements;
• Engage transportation professionals in the ways walkability affects their priorities;
• Develop a draft action plan for walkable community projects.

Module 5: Changing the System
After completing this module, fellows will be able to:
• Explain the roles/responsibilities of planners, engineers, and policymakers;
• Identify potential funding sources for local infrastructure planning and projects;
• Navigate the structure of local and state government and engage elected officials in conversations about walkability;
• Engage professionals in multiple fields, including public health, planning and education, on the ways walkability affects their priorities;
• Describe the difference between advocacy and lobbying;
• Develop an advocacy action plan.

Module 6: Planning Campaigns
After completing this module, fellows will be able to:
• Describe VZ, SRTS, and CS campaigns in detail;
• Design and implement effective policy campaigns, such as reducing speed limits and requiring complete streets;
• Explain and practice “strategic thinking” and “strategic planning”;
• Develop a one-year “task-oriented” action plan for their community;
• Develop a three-year “goal-oriented” action plan.
Instructional Methodology

The curriculum and its implementation guidelines were developed with the following challenges and opportunities in mind:

- The educational program must be completed within a compressed timeline;
- The fellows are physically located throughout the U.S., and are part-time students for whom 5–10 hours/week of study time is a reasonable expectation;
- The program requires study of articles, news stories, case studies, video interviews, white papers, research reports, and other documents, which are available online;
- The program requires hands-on community research and field activities, interactive discussions with other fellows and exposure to national experts;
- Video-interactive internet platforms now permit live, face-to-face meetings;
- Annual national conferences provide opportunities for physical gatherings.

In order to effectively deliver this curriculum, a mentoring system was established as the foundation of the program. The same experienced walkable community advocates who formed the advisory team were recruited as Walking College Mentors. Once fellows were selected, mentoring groups made up of five fellows and two mentors were set up for the remainder of the program.

In the first year of the Walking College (2015), these groups were based on the geographical locations of the mentors and fellows to simplify the scheduling of the “discussion forums,” when the groups met by video-conference technology. However, the Walking College is an evolving, dynamic project that is constantly being evaluated and updated as needed. In the second year, responding to feedback from both fellows and mentors, the groups were organized according to the type of community (urban/suburban/rural, degree of density/sparsity, neighborhood/city/county, etc.) each fellow was working in.

Each of the six modules is scheduled for two weeks, during which time fellows are expected to complete all of the following study components:

1. Complete a list of online reading and review assignments consisting of a mandatory reading list (about 6 hours per module) and a suggested list of articles and other resources that the fellow should be familiar with. While most articles are available as open-access resources, others are uploaded to the America Walks website to make them available to the fellows.
2. Attend a one-hour broadcast webinar presentation for each module exposing the fellows to nationally recognized speakers with expertise in specific areas. Because each module covers a wide range of related topics, each webinar typically takes one part of the content for that module and provides in-depth information including demonstration by a hands-on practitioner. The webinar format makes it easy for fellows to submit questions to the presenter and receive real-time responses.

3. Conduct one or more community research and field projects per module including a walk audit, researching pedestrian crash statistics for the fellow’s community, attending a city council meeting, and interviewing the planning director about zoning codes. Several activities are presented for each module and fellows are expected to complete at least one of them and be prepared to report back during their mentoring group’s discussion forums.

4. Participate in one virtual discussion forum per module along with others in their mentoring group. This provides an opportunity for synchronous, interactive learning during each of the six modules. Using an internet videoconferencing platform, members of each mentoring group gather for one hour every two weeks to discuss the content of the current module. To help them facilitate the conversation, mentors are given discussion prompts which can focus on the reading material, webinar presentation, community activity, or fellows’ questions.

5. A community action plan is the final assignment of the Walking College. The purpose of this plan is to guide the fellows’ future work in their communities, and it must consist of two parts: a long-range plan (say, 3–5 years) laying out major goals to be accomplished, and a short-range plan (typically 1 year) defining specific tasks that will lead to the goals. The initial draft of the community action plan is built up incrementally, because fellows are required to write part of the plan as a study component.

An innovative and essential element of the Walking College is attendance at a national conference. In October 2015, Walking College fellows and mentors gathered in Washington, D.C., for the National Walking Summit. In September 2016, the second class of fellows joined their mentors in Vancouver, B.C., for the Pro Walk, Pro Bike, Pro Place conference.
Attending a national conference at the end of the Walking College program provides fellows with the opportunity to meet and develop relationships with national and international experts in the field and to get to know other fellows and mentors. The community of practice allows for the sharing of best practices among professionals that goes beyond what is presented in conference sessions. Walking College Fellows are invited to participate in special Walking College work sessions and social events where they are given an opportunity to present draft action plans and receive feedback from their peers.

Recruitment

In addition to designing the learning objectives, course curriculum, and instructional methodology, it is important to implement an effective recruitment process to attract a cohort of local walkable-community advocates who are ready and able to undertake the responsibility of this program. To accomplish this, the Walking College planning team developed an application form consisting of two sets of questions, designed to solicit information about the individual applying to become a Walking College Fellow, and the community in which she or he works.

Individual questions include:

- Which of the following best describes you? … [community advocate, school teacher, public health professional, etc.]
- Are you affiliated with an organization/business? If yes, please describe;
- Why is walking and walkable community design important to you?
- What have you done previously (if anything) to promote walking and/or walkable community design, and over what time frame?
- What else do you want us to know about you?

Community questions include:

- Describe your community’s demographics, key institutions, land-use patterns, transportation systems, and walkability.
- What organizations exist with an interest in walking, walkability, access/mobility, equity, transportation, health, and related topics?
- Describe any existing events and programs, street design or construction projects, and existing or proposed policies that promote walking, active living, etc.
- What are your community’s biggest opportunities and challenges related to walking and walkability?
- What else do you want us to know about your community?
Each year, the application form is posted on the America Walks website for one month. Numerous announcements about the opportunity to become a Walking College Fellow are sent out through various communication channels, including those of partner organizations. Halfway through the application period, a Walking College orientation webinar is held in order to provide potential applicants with an overview of the program and application process, and to answer questions.

In both the first and second years of the Walking College, about 75 applications were received to fill 25 available fellowships. A review team made up of America Walks staff and Walking College Mentors selected the group of applicants who are at an appropriate stage of readiness to complete the curriculum (already working on walking issues, but not too experienced/knowledgeable). The review team also focused on maximizing the diversity of the fellows based on their state, geography, community type, demographics, and professional background in order to reach those communities that will benefit the most from the Walking College.

In addition to creating an innovative and unique program based on prevailing literature, a comprehensive evaluation of the Walking College program was conducted to see the results on both individuals and communities. The next section outlines the key results from the assessment.
EVALUATION OF THE
2015 WALKING COLLEGE

Overview

A comprehensive Walking College Evaluation Plan was developed during the program design phase. This plan included a demand survey, process evaluation surveys, outcome evaluation analysis, and long-term impact evaluation.

Process and Content Evaluation (Fellows)

Walking College Fellows were asked to complete a survey at the end of each two-week module. This survey assessed the likelihood of fellows using the information presented as well as their individual level of satisfaction with each portion. Fellows were asked to rate the module in six areas (choice of topics, quality of readings, community assignments, webinar presenters, Google Hangouts technology, and discussion forums). Their rating options were 1 to 5, where 1 was “highly unsatisfied” and 5 was “highly satisfied.”

From this information, we have been able to look at the effectiveness of each resource provided throughout the program. There was also space for comments about the module or about the Walking College in general. During the 2015 Walking College, we used feedback from these surveys to make immediate changes to the program such as prioritizing reading materials, and also made changes for the 2016 program such as moving from Google Hangouts to Zoom for the discussion forums.

Process and Content Evaluation (Mentors)

Mentors were asked to complete a survey after each module’s discussion forum. These surveys provide information on perceived levels of learning, understanding, and engagement of the fellows in this setting. Mentors were asked to rate each discussion forum according to five measurement criteria (engagement and participation of fellows, quality of dialogue, “aha” moments, quality of discussion forum prompts, topic and materials). They used a rating scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was “low” and 5 was “high” to rate each of the criteria. These scores were then combined to give the discussion forum an overall score between 5 and 25.

The qualitative information obtained through these surveys has been compared with the qualitative information from the fellows’ surveys to help validate responses. Their comments were reviewed in depth and assessed for any changes that could be made immediately and those that could be used in the future.
Outcome Evaluation

*Methods and Response Rates*
Evaluation was conducted to assess the degree to which the fellows had achieved knowledge and confidence to act (self-efficacy) in content areas related to the Walking College objectives. The pre-test (n=25) took place before the start of the first module, the post-test (n=24) took place at the conclusion of the sixth module, and wave 3 (n=23) took place six weeks after the post-test. Surveys included a set of Likert-type questions to measure the fellows’ progression towards competence in the Walking College objectives. The first set of questions assessed the fellows’ self-reported confidence, or self-efficacy, to complete particular tasks, and the second set of questions assessed the fellows’ self-reported level of skills and knowledge around particular topics.

All three waves had 100 percent response rates, when considering the number of fellows still participating in the program (25 at the start, or “baseline”; 24 in August, or “wave 2”; and 23 in November, or “wave 3”).

*Summary of Evaluation Results*
The “self-confidence” questions were based on the seven objectives of the Walking College and asked for the fellows’ self-reported confidence to perform specific functions. Fellows were asked to respond to the statements on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 indicated “not confident at all” and 7 indicated “extremely confident.”

Figure 2 on the next page shows the results for the “self-confidence” questions across the three data collection points. Between the start of the Walking College and the end of the Walking Summit, there was an increase of more than 15 percent for every one of the statements. The statements that had the lowest baseline scores had some of the largest increases in their means. For example, the overall increase in “confidence to fund-raise effectively” was 78.57 percent, from 2.80 to 5.00. This could be due to having more opportunity for improvement or the success of the program in these areas.

There are important differences between the mean changes from baseline to wave 2 (during the instructional portion of the Walking College) and those from wave 2 to wave 3 (during the independent study projects and Walking Summit). The changes from baseline to wave 2 were all increases of more than 20 percent, with three statements having mean increases over 50 percent: “I feel confident that I have the tools to fund-raise effectively for my programs” (87.50%); “I feel confident that I can implement policy campaigns related to walkable communities” (56.72%); and “I feel confident that
I have the tools to fund-raise effectively for my programs” (87.50%); “I feel confident that I can implement policy campaigns related to walkable communities” (56.72%); and “I feel confident that I can design policy campaigns relating to walkable communities” (51.78%). In contrast, changes from the wave 2 to wave 3 measurements were very small (all about 3 percent or less) and most were decreases compared with the “wave 2” scores. This suggests that the impressive improvements in self-confidence in these areas caused by the instructional component were not continued as a result of the independent study projects and attendance at the Walking Summit, as had been expected. Fellows’ self-confidence appeared to level off after module 6. Continued evaluation is planned to assess long-term, sustained change.

In the second series of questions, Fellows were asked to rate their level of knowledge and skill in nine specific areas from 1 (“beginner”) to 5 (“expert”). These statements were, again, based on the seven objectives of the Walking College. As with the “self-confidence” questions, there were significant increases from the baseline to the wave 2 measurements, with the highest increase being in “Designing Policy Campaigns” (73.94%) followed closely by “Implementing Policy Campaigns” (49.55%).

Figure 2: Mean Responses to “Self-Confidence” Questions
However, unlike the “self-confidence” questions, fellows’ self-reported knowledge and skill levels continued to increase during their independent study projects and attendance at the National Walking Summit. This may be attributable to the continued learning sessions that the fellows were exposed to at the summit prior to their completing the wave 3 measurement of the survey. Figure 3 below shows the change in averages over the three data collection points.

Fellows were also asked to assess how well prepared they felt to implement their independent study project at the conclusion of module 6. At this point some of the fellows were already working on their projects, and others had not begun the process. As shown in figure 4, all except one of the fellows felt that they were “prepared” or “very prepared” for their projects. Figure 4 shows the responses to this survey question. Finally, when fellows were asked whether they would recommend the Walking College program to a friend or colleague, 100 percent responded “yes.”
Figure 4: Preparation for Community Assignment
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation results of the 2015 cohort, four main changes were recommended to improve the program. Below is a summary of those recommendations as well as how they were assessed to improve the 2016 Walking College experience.

1. **Reassess the use of Google Hangouts as a technology platform.** From the end of the first module, it was clear that the technology platform used for the discussion forums was not ideal. Google Hangouts was new to many of the fellows and mentors and proved to be challenging. Comments like “Technical difficulties in the mentoring group discussion forum detracted a bit ...” suggest that the discussion forums’ overall engagement and participation can be improved by reassessing the technology and considering other options. For the 2016 cohort the team used Zoom conferencing, which has easy-to-use audio and visual components as well as troubleshooting procedures that can be followed if necessary.

2. **Review the mentoring group structure for the fellows.** The fellows varied in employment sector, type of community (small, large, rural, urban, etc. …), and motives for being walkable-community advocates. Fellows and mentors suggested that factors other than geographic region might be a better basis for choosing the mentoring groups. Different types of communities have different needs as illustrated by this comment: “Most of the materials are geared for urban settings ... we understand that with doing this work for over 8 years in a rural setting ... I’m still able to glean very helpful information and apply it to our situation. Thank you.” For the 2016 cohort, the fellows were grouped based on the type of community they are serving. Mentors had the opportunity to choose the group they felt most confident working with in order to enhance the experience has much as possible.

3. **Maintain the focus on high-quality study materials.** Fellows frequently commented on the quality (relevance, readability, interest value) of the resources provided in the six modules. Although there was a lot of material to cover, they felt that having high-quality study materials easily available throughout the process was beneficial to their learning and to their success. For the 2016 cohort there was a continued focus on the materials provided to fellows. Mentors had the opportunity to review the materials used in each module and comment on their relevance and usefulness as well as provide options for new materials.
4. Provide opportunities for one-on-one mentoring. Several fellows expressed a desire to have some type of “office hours” with the mentors, at which they could address specific challenges they were having with the study materials and receive one-on-one assistance. For the 2016 cohort, each mentor was contracted to provide up to 5 hours of additional one-on-one support to fellows.

The outcome evaluation showed consistent and substantial increases in self-assessed knowledge, skill level, and self-confidence to do the work of a local walkable-community advocate, during the 13-week, six-module instructional portion of the Walking College. While self-confidence remained static or fell slightly, knowledge and skill level continued to increase, but more slowly, during the independent study projects and Walking Summit participation. Fellows from this first cohort were asked to provide success stories and updates on their community projects. Some of these stories are highlighted in Appendix B.

The Legacy of the Walking College

While the design and implementation of the Walking College was an important development in the programming of America Walks, we expect the long-term impact of the program to be even greater. Throughout this program each advocate develops skills, relationships and plans that will grow their work within the walking movement. They are also able to take the skills back to their communities to inform neighbors, colleagues, elected officials, and anyone else who will listen. This growth in individual human capital will have a positive impact not only on individual communities, but on the walking movement as a whole.

Growth and development of the walking movement has wide-ranging benefits to both individual communities and the United States as a whole. The personal and community health benefits from promoting walking as physical activity are well documented. Recent research has also shown that walkable communities improve the economies and business development of towns, and encourage future growth by attracting new residents and businesses. The Walking College will expand the reach and prevalence of these types of communities through the efforts of the individual advocates.
### APPENDIX A: LOGIC MODEL

#### Inputs
- Funding
- Program board
- Program Administration
- Walking College Mentors (10)
- Walking College Fellows (25)
- Program materials
- Program evaluator

#### Activities
- Facilitation of program activities
- Module Discussion Forums (df)
- Module readings
- Module community activity
- Module webinar
- Facilitation of program evaluation

#### Outputs
- Comprehensive documentation of the Walking College curriculum
- Evaluation reports and statistics
- DF Checklists (survey) (#)
- Pre-, Post-, and follow-up surveys
- Post-module surveys (#)
- Community activities completed (#)
- Webinars completed (#)
- Peer-learning forums completed (#)

#### Outcomes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short</th>
<th>Long</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Walking College is modified and/or improved based on evaluative outcomes</td>
<td>Continued funding for America Walks programming</td>
<td>An increase in innovation is seen in ways to make communities more walkable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact part of the Walking College curriculum is understood</td>
<td>Walking fellows become effective leaders in their communities</td>
<td>An increase in communities that have a balance between walking transportation, public transportation, and private auto transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellows achieve competency in the 7 Walking College Objectives *</td>
<td>Walking fellows have broad and deep community/national networks of advocates and partners.</td>
<td>Marked changes in walkability are seen in the communities where the fellows live/work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final community projects reflect ideas developed in the modules.</td>
<td>Walking fellows are confident and knowledgeable in where to obtain important information for their walking projects</td>
<td>An increase in communities where walking and biking are the “easy choice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellows can confidently use the information they learned in their own projects</td>
<td>Walking fellows give compelling and persuasive arguments for the importance of walkable communities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walking fellows are engaged in the broader community of walking advocates (regional/national/global)</td>
<td></td>
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#### Assumptions
- Fellows in each mentor group receive the same curriculum and information throughout the modules
- Community walkability is directly related to the work of community members as advocates

#### External Factors
- Political climate effects changes that can be made in communities
APPENDIX B: SUCCESS STORIES

Faye Paige Edwards, GirlTrek volunteer from St. Louis, MO

Faye Paige Edwards is a retired business and marketing professional, who volunteers as a Team Organizer with GirlTrek.

Faye promotes walking as a daily habit in the city and suburbs of the greater St Louis metro area. She focuses on African-American women and girls, who are encouraged to embrace walking as part of a healthy lifestyle and an act of community building. Her work in some urban neighborhoods has been more challenging because of environmental and systemic factors caused by decades of racism, poverty, and crime.

Prior to joining the Walking College, Faye recalls that she never appreciated the power citizens possess to make their built environment more walkable. The program helped her expand her understanding of walking as a behavioral choice and develop new skills in community advocacy. She joined a network of city residents, elected officials, city staff, and organizations advocating for slower traffic and a Vision Zero Policy. Faye participated in a fact-finding legislative visit to Kansas City; assisted in getting neighborhood resident support for traffic calming; designed and implemented a traffic calming perception change survey, and helped install demonstration projects.

First-Year Successes:

- Temporary demonstration projects were conducted in four neighborhoods with high traffic fatality rates, to reduce the speed of traffic and make residents felt safer.
- Two of the neighborhoods have requested permanent traffic calming solutions, and the demonstration project items are now part of a lending library that is used by other neighborhoods and by city officials developing a traffic calming ordinance.
- Advocates challenged a City of St Louis opinion that it would be illegal to place speed bumps in the public right-of-way, and the Department of Streets’ claim that they would be liable for damage to private and city vehicles, especially plow trucks.
- Alderman Chris Carter introduced a new bill that would allow at least 60% of the residents on a block to submit a petition requesting a speed table.
Ann Mansfield, public health coordinator from North East Iowa

Ann Mansfield is a health care professional and Project Coordinator for the North East Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI), whose goal is to increase access to healthy food and physical activity opportunities through policy, system and environmental changes.

The project targets six rural counties in NE Iowa with a population of just 98,000 people in small towns spread over 5,500 square miles. To address high rates of obesity and diabetes in these communities, FFI has developed a rural model for Walking School Buses and Bicycle Rodeos, with funding support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Ann has always viewed walking as one of the best ways for people to integrate physical activity into their daily routines.

Ann’s experience in the Walking College program increased her capacity to facilitate a regional collaboration involving 8 community hospitals and 5 county public health offices. After learning about the benefits of walking and the strategies for creating walkable places, she decided to focus the collaboration’s efforts to address childhood and adult obesity on walking and walkability. Ann reports that the knowledge and skills she developed in the Walking College and the opportunity to make connections with content experts have been immensely helpful in her work. The National Walking Summit sessions she attended on communications and health/medical community engagement have enabled her to convince her hospital and public health partners to embrace the Surgeon General’s Call to Action on Walking and Walkable Communities.

First-Year Successes:

- The regional community health stakeholder group has held three workshops and the level of collaboration has never been higher.
- As a result of the workshops, the group is creating a messaging campaign based on the health benefits of walking and the critical importance of walkable communities.
- Iowa’s Healthiest State Initiative (a Governor-led, privately-funded partnership) invited Ann to participate in their strategic planning process which, as a result of her recommendation and advocacy, led to the adoption of a 3-year plan focused on a statewide walking campaign.
- The Healthiest State Initiative launched the campaign in May, and is now planning a collaborative walkability workshop for State Health and Transportation Department officials later this summer and the first Iowa State Walking College in 2017.
Jim Palmquist, a volunteer for AARP Pennsylvania, is serving as State President of AARP Pennsylvania, a volunteer position serving 1.8 million members, and a retired Navy carrier pilot.

His community, Lower Macungie Township, is a low-density, suburban part of Pennsylvania (31,000 residents in 23 square miles), roughly equidistant between Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Wilkes-Barre, and New York City. Jim’s walkable community work focuses on installing walkways alongside arterial roads - strategically prioritizing those that connect neighborhoods with schools, employment districts, and shopping centers.

Jim reported benefiting from his participation in the Walking College in a number of ways. He learned how to become a better community leader and engage more effectively with elected officials. He also improved his mastery of technical issues such as traffic calming, intersection design, interpreting Walk Score measures, and using community programs to drive public policy and funding decisions. And, through his Walking College Mentoring Group, Jim has developed an advocacy network, including maintaining regular contact with one Fellow who is working in a similar suburban/rural environment in the Mid-Atlantic region.

First-Year Successes:
- Regional newspaper with circulation of 100,000 published front-page article featuring Jim and his work to promote walkways.
- Township commissioners approved $70,000 in new funding for construction of public walkways to be included in 2016 budget.
- Township commissioners recalled several previous walkway waivers and deferrals, meaning private property owners are now required to build walkways.
- Lower Macungie Township Walkways launched “Walk2Connect-inspired” program of weekly walks to engage community in walking and advocacy.
APPENDIX C: LITERATURE REVIEW REFERENCES


