



Priorities for Action: SCOPE Prince George

Sustainable Childhood Obesity Prevention through community Engagement



CITY OF
PRINCE GEORGE



MAY 2010

Prepared by **May Communications**

Priorities for Action: SCOPE Prince George

Sustainable Childhood Obesity Prevention through community Engagement

CONTENTS

INTRODUCING SCOPE	2
ABOUT SCOPE	2
SCOPE VISION	2
SCOPE MISSION	2
SCOPE VALUES	2
SCOPE OBJECTIVES	2
SUCCESSFUL MODELS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION	3
PROFILING THE PRINCE GEORGE COMMUNITY	4
SNAPSHOT OF YOUTH HEALTH	4
COMMUNITY ASSETS IN PRINCE GEORGE	4
PRIORITIES FOR TAKING ACTION	6
STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON	6
GAPS TO ADDRESS	6
OPPORTUNITIES FOR TAKING ACTION	7
ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY	8
STRATEGIES TO REACH PRINCE GEORGE FAMILIES	8
APPENDIX	10
ADDITIONAL STRENGTHS AND GAPS	10
PRINCE GEORGE MEETING EVALUATION	11
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	12
SCOPE CONTACTS	12

INTRODUCING SCOPE

On May 18, 2010, community leaders in Prince George took part in a planning workshop to develop **collective priorities for action to prevent childhood obesity**. The SCOPE project—Sustainable Childhood Obesity Prevention through community Engagement— led the event, and is funded by Child Health BC and supported by the City of Prince George.

About SCOPE

SCOPE stands for:

Sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve long-term change and long lasting impact ▪ Lead to a cultural shift and change in social norms
Childhood Obesity Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protect the health of future generations ▪ Support children to achieve healthy weights ▪ Support children to maintain healthy weights ▪ Prevent chronic disease
through community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include the community’s “voice” ▪ Ensure the effort is community led and focused on community priorities ▪ Engage collective community action

SCOPE VISION

A future where children **eat healthy** and are **physically active**, supported by a **healthy community environment**

SCOPE MISSION

To bring people together from all sectors of BC communities to make the **healthy choice the easy choice** for children

SCOPE VALUES

- Collaboration
- Equal partnerships
- Building on existing strengths and resources
- Collective local action
- Sustainability

SCOPE OBJECTIVES

- Develop and maintain effective community partnerships resulting in collaboration and collective action
- Work with the community to identify successful programs and areas of need, and define priorities for local action
- Implement sustainable and effective local action to build upon existing successes and address areas of need
- Help community members measure the impact of their efforts over time

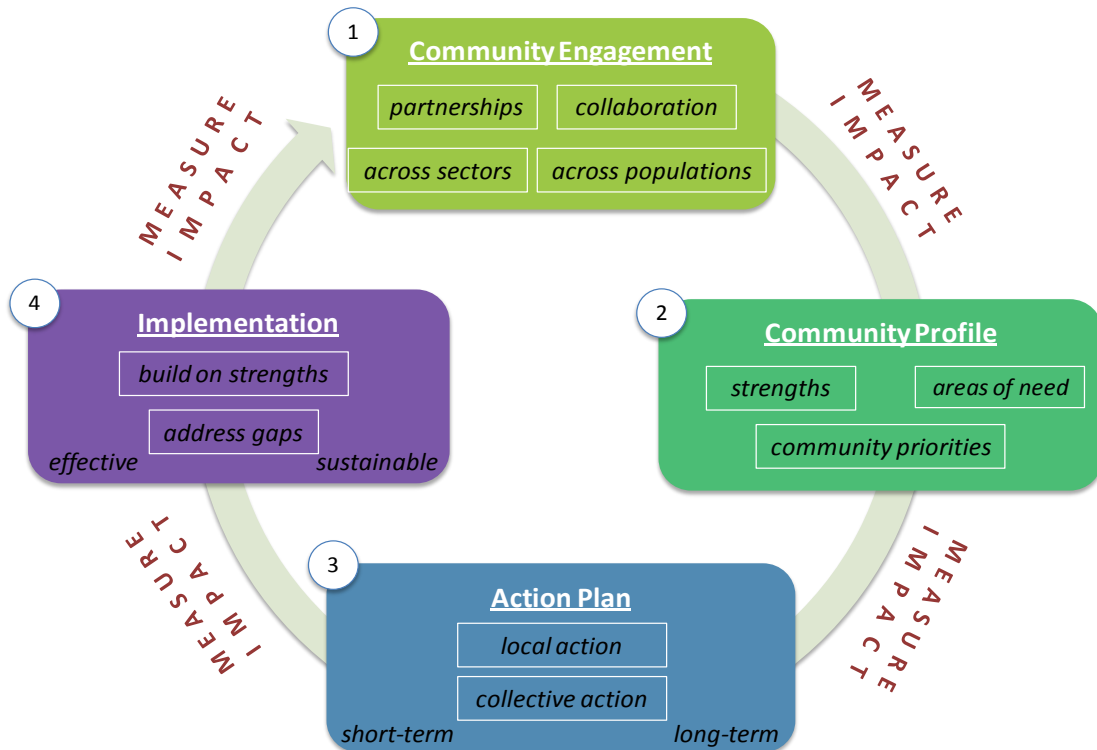
Successful Models for Community Action

Community-based models around the world have shown that collective action at the community level has been the only successful method for reducing obesity. Three community led programs have been able to reduce rates of obesity:

- The EPODE project in France
- Healthy Living Cambridge Kids (HLCK)
- Shape Up Somerville (SUS)

While not yet evaluated, the Obama administration's Let's Move campaign is based on these successful models.

Community engagement is crucial to foster partnerships and action across sectors, in a circular process, with measurement and evaluation at every stage:



PROFILING THE PRINCE GEORGE COMMUNITY

SCOPE is partnering with Prince George because the community has:

- A diverse population in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic status
- Both rural and urban lifestyles
- Unique weather patterns that impact lifestyle
- Existing community partnerships and strengths to build on

Snapshot of Youth Health

Prince George currently does not have childhood specific health data, but one local survey showed that¹:

- **Physical activity:** Over half of Prince George residents do not meet the World Health Organization's definition of being physically active
- **Healthy eating:** 45.9% of residents eat unhealthy one to three days a week, and 27.4% of residents eat unhealthy seven days a week

National data² on the health of children shows:

- Only 12% of kids meet Canadian physical activity guidelines requiring at least 90 minutes of physical activity per day
- Youth average six hours of screen time (TV, computers, etc.) per weekday, more than seven hours on weekends, and now start watching TV at five months old (compared to four years old in 1971)
- Less than one-third of youth use active transportation (walking, cycling, rolling)
- In 2004, 27% of boys and 25% of girls were overweight or obese
- By 2009, 30% of boys and 25% of girls were overweight or obese

Calculating obesity and overweight

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a child's weight (kg) and height (meters) [$BMI = \text{weight} \div (\text{height})^2$]. The number is plotted onto a growth chart for gender and age to get a BMI percentile, which shows how that child's BMI compares to children of the same age and gender. Weight status categories for children and teens are based on BMI percentiles:

- **Underweight** – BMI less than 5th percentile
- **Healthy weight** – BMI 5th to 85th percentile
- **Overweight** – BMI 85th to 95th percentile
- **Obese** – BMI greater than 95th percentile

Community Assets in Prince George

SCOPE also gathered information on community assets in Prince George in four categories—economics, land and physical assets, institutions, and associations—to:

- Describe existing programs, policies and services that promote the health of children and youth
- Learn from the success of community-based childhood obesity prevention programs in other parts of the world
- Identify new priorities for action that will expand upon existing efforts to create healthier environments and prevent childhood obesity in Prince George

¹ Prince George Active Communities, Physical Activity, and Healthy Eating Survey Report, 2007

² Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card, 2010; Health Reports, 2004; Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2007-2009

A report with highlights of this Prince George community asset profile is posted on the SCOPE website at www.childhood-obesity-prevention.org.

The Shape up Somerville and Healthy Living Cambridge Kids programs demonstrate how communities can mobilize together to create change. Both programs had six essential elements for success, and SCOPE examined what Prince George is doing in each of these areas:

- A **common guideline** that all sectors follow – HLCK established a 5-2-1 guideline: five or more fruits and vegetables a day, two hours or less of screen time, and one hour of physical activity. SUS was guided by the slogan, Eat Smart, Play Hard. Some groups in Prince George share similar guidelines. For example, the city’s active community committee, Participate Prince George, has a guideline to “eat healthy, be active,” and the HEAL network promotes Healthy Eating, Active Living in northern BC. But Prince George has not adopted one clear guideline for the entire community, which could prevent confusion and enhance the effectiveness of health messages.
- **School policies and initiatives** – Schools provide a captive audience of children and youth, so many efforts are focused here. Prince George is no exception, with provincial, school district and municipal initiatives, such as:
 - Mandatory daily physical activity for all high school students
 - All Prince George schools are registered Action Schools! BC
 - 600 students in Prince George use the school meal program
 - Joint Use Agreement between the school district and city gives community groups access to school gyms and fields during non-school hours
- **Before and after school programming** – In Prince George, community associations, groups and clubs offer a variety of recreational and sporting activities outside of school hours. But additional information on local before and after school programs, as well as gaps in this area, would help identify priorities for action that SCOPE could facilitate.
- **Family outreach** – This was a big component of the success for HLCK and SUS, with family newsletters, events, and an annual health report card documenting heights, weights and body mass index of children. Prince George has great programs in place, all targeting the same audience, but these programs could be more effective if approached in a coordinated way.
- **Community initiatives** – Organizations in Prince George provide a diverse range of community initiatives focused on healthy eating and physical activity, and many involve a spectrum of partners. For example, the farmers’ market now has an indoor location so it can run year round, the community garden partners with restaurants to use waste for composting, and the city has many affordable leisure programs.
- **Community support** – Prince George has engaged multiple stakeholders—including the City, Northern Health, School District 57, the YMCA, HEAL and others—to address childhood health issues in the community. But sometimes these partnerships operate in silos, despite having common goals and objectives. SCOPE PG aims to facilitate a broad community support network to strengthen collective action.

PRIORITIES FOR TAKING ACTION

At the planning session, Prince George community leaders identified strengths that SCOPE could build on and gaps that need to be addressed in the community. Participants then set priorities from among these categories, which are listed below. These strengths and gaps lead to opportunities for action that capitalize on community strengths and help address areas for improvement.

(Additional strengths and gaps that were identified, but not prioritized, are listed in the appendix.)

Strengths to build on

Prince George community leaders identified the following **strengths as priorities** that SCOPE can build on in the city:

- Community schools and teachers demonstrate leadership in promoting physical activities and healthy eating; for example, an FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder) cycling program has arranged a partnership with the BMX track
- The local business sector is engaged in sponsoring sporting events for children, but the messaging needs to change to promote healthy eating, not fast food
- Prince George has lots of affordable, accessible recreation facilities/activities and people use them
 - Expansion of the Prince George trail system
 - Soccer fields, pools, stadium, tennis, skate park, ice rinks, YMCA subsidized memberships/Rec Room for youth, etc.
- Members of the community identified health and wellness as the third goal/priority for the myPG community sustainability plan (www.myPG.ca)
- Healthiest Babies Possible encourages a healthy start with good prenatal care, and breast feeding is critical; the Northern Health slogan is “Healthy communities support breast feeding anytime, anywhere”
- The municipal government in Prince George is developing a city-wide community gardens policy
- The bioregional agricultural plan links farmers’ markets and health initiatives like the Farm to School program that connects schools and local farms to serve healthy meals in school cafeterias and improve student nutrition
- Bike to Work Week is an opportunity for parents to participate in physical activity with their kids
- Students in the culinary arts program at the College of New Caledonia could teach kids how to cook healthy meals
- City transit has bike racks to accommodate active transportation and still get people there on time

Gaps to address

Prince George community leaders identified the following **gaps as priorities** to focus on addressing:

- Many families who are at risk for developing overweight and obesity are struggling to get by
 - Families living under the poverty line face food security issues and struggle to have meals together
 - There is a greater prevalence of obesity and its complications among the poor
- More communication is needed to raise awareness of the programs/activities that are available

- New policy approaches are needed to address over scheduling and sleep hygiene
 - Families may have too many activities scheduled, which doesn't leave enough time to eat healthy meals and people opt for fast food instead
 - A related issue is the need to increase awareness of the link between obesity and lack of sleep that can result from over scheduling
- Kids are branded with fast food business logos on their sports uniforms, so the message contradicts the activity
- The childcare system does receive nutritional support, but physical activity is a gap
 - There's a lack of accessible activities for care providers to take groups of children to during school hours
- More summer activities are needed for children and youth
 - Camps focus on competitive sports, which can be intimidating for non-competitive kids, so camps are needed that emphasize different ability levels and healthy eating
 - Activities are needed to engage kids and keep them from focusing on screen time during the summer break

Opportunities for taking action

These strengths and weaknesses create **opportunities for taking action** in several key areas:

- **Communicate to raise awareness** – some examples include:
 - Work with the municipality and community organizations to publicize information on leisure and sporting events, programs, services, etc., to families, youth and children to promote awareness
 - Post information on community events, activities, etc. on the SCOPE website
 - Promote activities using the trail system and outdoor areas/facilities
 - Provide safe cycling education for cyclists and drivers in a media campaign
- **Build partnerships** – examples include:
 - Continue to develop the partnership with the City of Prince George on meeting healthy living goals the community has already identified
 - Seek/adapt business sector sponsorship
 - Shift sponsorship messaging to focus on physical activity and healthy eating
 - Co-sponsor the brand with SCOPE
 - Partner with the school district to:
 - Link with Farm to School, particularly through Prince George Secondary School, to reach vulnerable families
 - Work with schools/teachers focusing on families at risk
 - Promote mentoring such as culinary arts students teaching kids about healthy meals
 - Liaise with Healthiest Babies Possible to promote prenatal care

- Connect with community associations like the YMCA, Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Prince George Farmers' Market, and local recreational facilities to share information
- Link with the Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) network to promote common goals
- **Develop policy** – examples include:
 - Establish a healthy food policy and checklist for all SCOPE-related activities
 - Liaise with the municipality/schools/community groups to develop a common community policy for physical activity and healthy eating
 - Support the development of policy/guidelines to ensure people get home in time for adequate sleep

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Prince George community leaders recommended a range of community engagement activities to foster participation in SCOPE and, in particular, to engage families at risk who face barriers to taking part. Some populations who are harder to reach and face barriers include low income families, First Nations families and adolescent girls.

Strategies to reach Prince George families

- Employ a multimedia approach that shares information through the:
 - Internet – Use the launch of SCOPE's website to share information online
 - Announce SCOPE events on website
 - Seek community input on a blog/Facebook/Twitter
 - Post Prince George community asset profile/HLCK and SUS resource information online
 - Media – Communicate through newspapers, television and radio (These connections have already been established with media coverage of the planning session)
 - Posters/postcards – Notify people of events where they gather
- Promote awareness of the SCOPE brand by replacing fast food sport shirts with SCOPE sponsorship shirts
- Develop a checklist for SCOPE to role model healthy eating when engaging people
- Have SCOPE do community outreach:
 - Get SCOPE reps to speak at activities or venues to connect with families where people naturally gather
 - Go to schools that are activity hubs, particularly for families who are struggling
 - Some community schools have done focused work within vulnerable communities
 - Link with the Prince George Secondary School team that applied for Farm to School; PGSS is the largest school in the community and brings in five feeder schools at the highest risk for inequities and hunger
 - Go to community organizations where families access services

- Northern Family Health Society, Carney Hill Neighbourhood Centre, Carrier Sekani Family Services, Prince George native Friendship Centre, YMCA, etc. (see Prince George asset map)
- Provide healthy snacks/meals at SCOPE events to encourage participation:
 - Ask families what they need to generate dialogue and they will be willing to tell you
- Engage businesses/industry to donate running shoes, equipment, bathing suits, etc., to bring down affordability barriers and provide opportunities for children and youth to participate in activities
 - Also promote clothing swaps where people share clothing their children have outgrown
- Raise awareness of free transit for students to help address transportation barriers
- Disseminate information to reach people at the neighbourhood level
 - Develop role models within neighbourhood centres who can be resource people on SCOPE for vulnerable populations in the community
 - Create opportunities for small local events and activities to be part of SCOPE too, a “block party” approach

APPENDIX

Additional Strengths and Gaps

The table below lists additional strengths and gaps that were not identified as top priorities by the Prince George community leaders who attended the SCOPE planning session:

<p>STRENGTHS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community soccer associations with 3,000 children and youth participating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents showing by example, participating with their kids, rather than just arranging schedules and being spectators ▪ Prince George has the most volunteers per capita in BC ▪ YMCA programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth zone recently opened the Rec Room - Monthly free community recreation night (city provides a grant) - Family climbing wall program ▪ The city’s beautiful outdoor environment creates unique opportunities for physical activities ▪ Connaught Youth Centre ▪ Improved air quality facility being built ▪ Prince George is transitioning from a predominantly resource-based economy to becoming a university and health care economy ▪ Prince George is a hub and role model for northern communities, with the potential for broader impact in leading by example ▪ The Public Health Agency of Canada has an office in Prince George, with three national priorities: obesity, injury prevention, and mental health ▪ The city has a diversity of vegetable gardens in various locations ▪ HEAL chats offer connectivity to all of the north, using phone lines to discuss a range of issues ▪ City transit is free for students ▪ Healthy Kids Day
<p>GAPS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SCOPE and the community will need to work with the local press to overcome opposition to cycling ▪ Changing the location of French immersion means kids can no longer walk to school ▪ People aren’t aware of what schools are doing to promote activity

Prince George Meeting Evaluation

The table below summarizes the feedback Prince George community leaders provided on the SCOPE planning session:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Total number of surveys: 18 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100% either agree (4) or strongly agree (5) that the meeting was a good use of their time. ▪ (Average score 4.44) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100% answered YES to all four parts in question four, asking if the meeting will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve capacity to address prevention of childhood obesity - Increase awareness and knowledge of programs, services, organizations and individuals who are currently working to prevent childhood obesity in the community - Result in the use of my or my organization's expertise and resources to contribute to preventing childhood obesity in the community - Enhance my ability to make a bigger difference in the prevention of childhood obesity 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100% would like to participate in future meetings 	
<p><i>What people liked about the meeting:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearly established agendas, good structure, well organized ▪ Reminders and recaps were helpful ▪ Sufficient background information ▪ The voting ▪ Open discussion format
<p><i>Suggestions for improvement:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More time (a half hour) ▪ A concrete plan (with SMART objectives) and future mapping ▪ Provide a copy of PPT presentation ▪ An opportunity for networking and discussion ▪ Engage the audience contribution even more (especially quiet people)
<p><i>Who are the groups that are hard to reach?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low socioeconomic demographic (especially single parented poor families) ▪ Adolescent girls ▪ Youth ▪ First Nations ▪ People living in remote areas ▪ Homeless
<p><i>Votes on factors that would make SCOPE meetings more accessible and convenient:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Morning meetings 7 ▪ Afternoon meetings 11 ▪ Evening meetings 6 ▪ Food 9 ▪ Free parking 8 ▪ Public transportation 6 ▪ Childcare 5 ▪ Venue 1 (public market, where the public could also join; quieter venue, away from the traffic)