



June 2015

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The Convergence Partnership envisions a nation in which every community fosters health, prosperity, and well-being for all, by promoting:

- *Equity as the means to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate and prosper;*
- *Policies and practices that create conditions that sustain healthy people and healthy places; and*
- *Connections among people across multiple fields and sectors that catalyze and accelerate the work.*

If you know of efforts that focus on reducing inequities, encourage cross-sector partnerships, and stimulate action for policy change, [contact us](#) and we may feature it in the newsletter!

Federal Updates

USDA to Give Priority Funding to Regional Economic Development Projects

U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the Regional Development Priority (RDP) Policy. RDP is a Farm Bill provision that will make it easier for rural communities to access resources to enhance long-term community development programs, maximizing the effectiveness of USDA investments in rural America. Under the RDP, communities with multijurisdictional economic development plans will be able to request funding priority for their loans and will be judged by how well their request supports their region's existing development plan, and how well the plan addresses regional collaboration and considers other funding sources — including philanthropic organizations and other federal agencies.

[Learn more about regional economic development projects.](#)

Congress Extends MAP-21 to July 31

In late May, Congress voted to extend Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) to July 31, two months past its May 31 expiration date. While the short-term fix may have diverted a default of MAP-21, Congress must pass a long-term, comprehensive transportation bill that includes robust investments and creates affordable and accessible transportation options for those who need it most.

[Read more on the Transportation for America Blog.](#)

[Read the Leadership Conference's call for long-term transportation reauthorization.](#)

Senators Launch “Dear Colleague” Letter Series to Support the Prevention and Public Health Fund

Last month, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) launched the first in a series of “Dear Colleague” letters in support of continued investments in the Prevention and Public Health Fund. The first letter, released on May 21, was signed by 13 senators and highlighted three Prevention Fund success stories in Washington, Tennessee, and South Carolina and stressed the importance of strengthening the U.S. health-care system investments that help protect families and communities from getting sick, and reaffirmed the importance of the Prevention and Public Health Fund for advancing healthy people and healthy places.

[Read the full letter that was released on May 21, 2015.](#)

[Read the full letter that was released on June 5, 2015.](#)

Funding Opportunities

Evidence for Action: Investigator-Initiated Research to Build a Culture of Health

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has announced a total of \$2.2 million in grants to encourage and support high-impact, action-oriented research on the impacts of policies, programs, and partnerships that will help advance health equity. RWJF is looking for applicants that are either public entities or nonprofit organizations who represent a wide range of fields and disciplines — including those outside of the health sector — and are committed to building and promoting a culture of health.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Applicants must first submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) and will be notified within eight weeks as to whether they are approved to submit a full proposal. The Evidence for Action program embraces diversity and inclusion and strongly encourages applications in support of individual applicants, an approach that will help expand the perspectives and experiences RWJF brings to its work.

[Read the full call for proposals.](#)

In the News

The MacArthur Foundation Releases Third Annual Housing Matters Survey

In early June, the MacArthur Foundation released its third annual How Housing Matters survey conducted by Hart Research Associates. The survey explores the challenges faced by renters and homeowners across the United States and looks at the attitudes about the U.S. housing crisis and who is impacted the most. Additionally, the report gauges the various reasons for U.S. housing insecurities and how national and regional stakeholders can ensure more people have access to quality, affordable housing.

Based on survey findings, Americans believe that despite some improvements, the United States is still struggling with the housing crisis that began seven years ago and many are still pessimistic about the economic mobility of future generations. Some key highlights include:

- Americans believe that the housing crisis continues and feel that it is more likely for “middle-class people (to fall) into a lower economic class” than for “people in lower economic classes (to rise) into the middle class”.
- While some Americans are seeing improvements in the housing situation nationally, many feel that the housing crisis is not a thing of the past.
- Half of Americans would like to see the federal government prioritize housing issues and an even larger percentage would like to see their state and local leaders prioritize housing issues.

Many Americans think it is harder for young people to achieve a secure middle-class lifestyle, however millennials are hopeful about their future economic mobility. The MacArthur Foundation’s How Housing Matters strategy is centered on the notion that affordable housing is essential in promoting a wide range of positive social and economic outcomes and aims to generate the momentum necessary for comprehensive housing policy reform.

[Read the full survey and learn more about the MacArthur Foundation's How Housing Matters strategy.](#)

The CDC Releases New Community Health Improvement Tool

Earlier this year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the Community Health Improvement (CHI) Navigator — a website designed to support community organizations that are interested in improving overall community health through the Community Health Improvement (CHI) process.

This “one-stop-shop” offers expert vetted tools and resources to help community stakeholders:

- create a visual depiction of who, what, where, and how for improving community health;
- make the case for collaborative approaches to community health improvement;
- establish and maintain effective collaborations; and
- find interventions that work for the greatest impact on health and well-being for all.

Additionally, it provides leaders with the information necessary to make decisions about how to invest in their communities and address their community's health needs. This database can be used by various community stakeholders who are involved in CHI work and are committed to implementing innovative strategies for robust community health improvement.

[Access the Community Health Improvement Navigator and learn more.](#)

Events

Webinar: The Grocery Store Prescription: How Smart Shopping Leads to Healthy Eating

Healthy Food Access Portal

Thursday, July 9, 2015

11:00 am PT

Supermarkets are responding to the obesity crisis by changing their product offerings, in-store environments, and marketing practices to make healthy choices more accessible, affordable, and appealing. This webinar will summarize the factors that influence low-income consumers' food choices and describe culturally appropriate interventions that promote healthier shopping and eating. Participants will have the opportunity to explore effective nutrition education programs and walk away with practical tips on how to work with grocery retailers in their communities and make the healthy choice

Resources

[*Embracing Equity in Community Health Improvement*](#), Health Resources in Action

Across America, many public and private sector organizations are committed to generating greater opportunities and resources for the nation's most underserved communities. While many organizations have similar overarching goals, much of this work is happening in silos. This report discusses the rationale and multisector approaches for promoting equity throughout the community health improvement (CHI) process, and provides organizations with a step-by-step approach for taking

the easy choice. [Learn more and register for this webinar.](#)

Equity Summit 2015: All In for Inclusion, Justice, and Prosperity

PolicyLink

October 27-29, 2015

Los Angeles, CA

Equity Summit 2015 will ground inclusion, justice, and prosperity in the urgent issues of today and connect them to the creativity and bold vision of the equity movement. Advocates from across the nation will be part of interactive panels, tours, and in-depth, skills-building sessions that showcase how local leaders can impact policy change. Equity Summit 2015 will forge powerful partnerships for building an equitable and prosperous nation. [Learn more and take advantage of early bird registration rates.](#)

health equity from theory to practice.

[***The Business Case for Racial Equity in Michigan***](#), The Altarum Institute and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

States and communities are equitable when all residents — regardless of their race or ethnic background — are able to contribute to economic growth. Furthermore, a diverse workforce can contribute to greater success in an increasingly global economy. Unfortunately, the average child of color in Michigan will experience poorer health outcomes, fewer employment opportunities, and is more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system than the average White child. This brief details the cost of failing to address the pervasive inequities in Michigan and makes the business case for advancing racial equity.

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