

# Vulcan, Alberta

## Community Impact Report

# The Road to Success: A Comprehensive Community Cancer Prevention Project

Between 2015 and 2019, 16 rural communities partnered with Alberta Health Services (AHS), Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Fund (ACPLF) to pilot *The Road to Success: Comprehensive Community Cancer Prevention Project*.

The *Road to Success* is based on the principle that communities have the power to determine their own solutions to create healthy community environments. Communities are supported to develop initiatives that address a wide range of health areas or concerns across their community, rather than focus on changing individual behaviours one person at a time. Using the *Road to Success*, communities develop sustainable action plans that create a healthy community environment based on the knowledge and wisdom that is unique to their own community. The pilot provided facilitated support, tools, and seed funding. *Road to Success* is designed to help communities succeed in their work by using a seven-step process (shown in Figure 1). The approach also integrates five key building blocks and guides communities on how to take action on local priorities. The five building blocks are community engagement; multi-sectoral collaboration; political commitment; healthy public policy; and asset-based community development.

## Vulcan’s Journey

This report highlights Vulcan’s journey through this project, and shows the commitment of a core group of individuals in building a healthy community for all.

Engaging in this approach, Vulcan successfully:

- *created multi-sectoral community connections*
- *conducted an assessment to gather community-level data*
- *prioritized areas to act on*
- *created action and evaluation plans while leveraging community resources*
- *evaluated outcomes of the action plan*
- *shared the results of the community initiative to shift local thinking toward broader ways to prevent cancer*

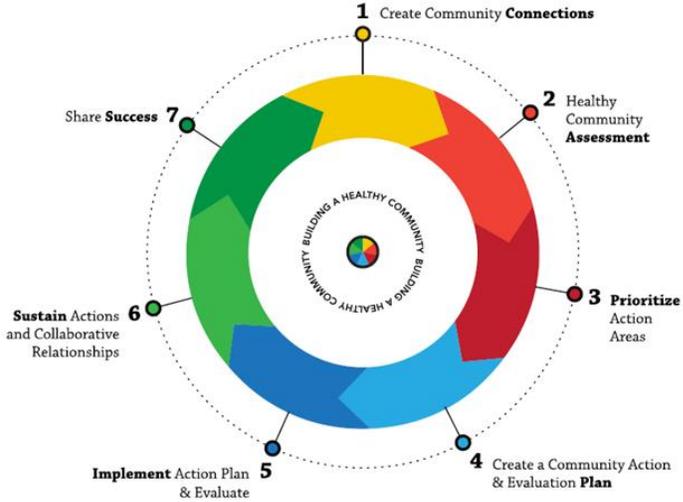


Figure 1. Steps in the *Road to Success* Comprehensive Community Cancer Prevention Project

### Did You Know?

45% of new cancer cases in Alberta can be prevented by reducing risk factors that include:



Low physical activity



Unhealthy eating



Ultraviolet radiation exposure

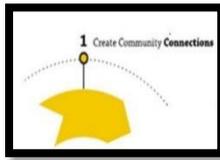


Tobacco use



Alcohol consumption

# Creating community connections



*“Well there are lots of partnerships that were either there prior or became stronger. Everything from the mode of delivery for the snow shoes, or health awareness in our local grocery store, I think, just as individuals, we all talk a lot more.”*

- Act 4 Health member



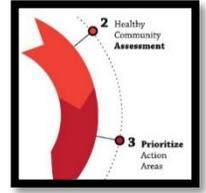
Vulcan’s journey started with the creation of Act 4 Health, an active group of community members that came together in February 2016. ACT 4 Health is grounded on four pillars of cancer prevention (healthy eating, active living, limiting UV exposure, and community connections). The team is comprised of representatives from the following five sectors:

1. Community-at-large: Community leaders, members, and volunteers from Town of Vulcan and Vulcan County; and Vulcan Health and Wellness Foundation Trustees
2. Community facilities and organizations: Community Services Manager, Town of Vulcan; Vulcan County early childhood development coalition coordinator; Vulcan County Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), community liaison and food bank manager; Executive Director, Rainbow Literacy and Learning Society; Vulcan public library manager (ad hoc)
3. Healthcare: Calgary Rural Primary Care Network chronic disease nurse; AHS community development coordinator; AHS public health dietitian; AHS clinical dietitian
4. Workplaces: Nurse manager, Vulcan Hospital (for completion of SUCCESS tool); Chief Administrative Officer Peter Dawson Lodge (for completion of Success tool); Town of Vulcan
5. Schools: Principal, County Central High School (retired)

In addition to the core team, five key, ongoing partnerships were created with the Vulcan County Food Bank, Market Street Vulcan, the Vulcan County Health and Wellness Foundation, Vulcan Golf and

Country Club and the Vulcan Country early childhood development coalition.

# Healthy community assessment and prioritizing action



*“I think it changed the way we look at the community too. We look at its potential when we analyzed all the assets in the community. You started looking at the community differently and the other thing that I really like about it is that it is changing the perspective of the health community out there.”*

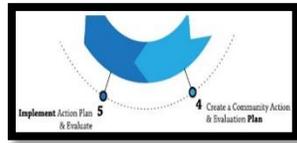
- Act 4 Health member

Tools and facilitation support from ACPLF guided the Vulcan team to assess and understand their community environments. The Supportive Community Cancer Environmental Assessment Tool (SUCCESS TOOL) was used to assess community indicators of healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco and alcohol reduction, and UV protection (see Pilot Project Assessment and Evaluation). A Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results (SOAR) analysis was also completed to guide discussions around community assets.

With ACPLF facilitator guidance, the ACT 4 Health team used the Changeability Matrix (a simple table consisting of four squares that helps users differentiate between degrees of importance and degrees of changeability of a community issue), to identify local priorities. The team then brainstormed actions based on community assets, the SUCCESS results and potential focus areas. The team discussed which findings to prioritize, and planned actions on areas with the greatest likelihood of change and impact, taking various community assets into account. By using these strategies, the team moved from prioritizing directly into planning community action.

The team identified the following community priorities: encouraging the consumption of healthy food; creating a bike friendly community with additional supports that include strategies promoting the bike racks and outdoor signage; raising awareness of UV radiation risk; and creating community connections and a sense of belonging.

# Implementing the action plan



*“The fact that there are snow shoes in the library, people are just amazed by that and the fact that we can push the Rec. programs that are going on and you can tell people who are afraid to walk in the wintertime, hey did you know that we have cross country skiing on the golf course and the outdoor fitness space. I think that has been good.”*  
- Act 4 Health member

## Healthy eating: Encourage consumption of healthy foods

Early discussions between ACT 4 Health and the Vulcan County Food Bank identified an opportunity to encourage healthy eating while simultaneously generating support for the local food bank. A partnership quickly grew with Market Street Vulcan. The local grocery store and Market Street owner recognized the critical role their business could play in a community-wide healthy eating initiative. Market Street and the Food Bank developed a mechanism to link the purchase of healthy food to generating funds for the food bank. At the same time, members of ACT 4 Health developed signs, along with a process to identify where the signs should be located in the store. Over 200 food identification signs were placed alongside healthy food choices, while larger signs were installed overhead to alert customers to the initiative. Additionally, ACT 4 Health installed a pamphlet rack in the store entrance containing information on how to choose, prepare and cook various healthy food options. Several resources were developed by the AHS public health dietitian specifically for this initiative. Over 1000 healthy eating resources were scooped up from the pamphlet rack. The coalition promoted the healthy eating initiative in two editions of the local recreation guide, distributed to every municipal household and widely throughout the county. Sidewalk signs also promoted the initiative. Launched just before Christmas 2017, the healthy food initiative generated \$1326.24 for the food bank roughly one year later! Funds generated were used to purchase 720 pounds of fruits and vegetables for hampers to feed 56 adults and 27 children!

ACT 4 Health also supplied healthy snacks options to over 1000 participants at the Tinman Triathlon.

The local arena also supported healthy eating by posting AHS *Healthy Eating Starts Here* posters at their concession stand.

Connections and conversations at the ACT 4 Health coalition table launched two spin-off initiatives. One conversation about encouraging local gardening resulted in the local Communities in Bloom committee sponsoring a workshop on container gardening by Lyndon Penner. Another conversation about supporting unique families resulted in a spin-off partnership between Vulcan & Region FCSS, Vulcan Regional Food Bank, Rainbow Literacy and Vulcan County early childhood coalition to support Low German Mennonite moms learning about healthy eating for families and children.



## Physical activity: Create a bike friendly community, with additional supports for free/low cost physical activity

Act 4 Health initially focused on creating opportunities for low or no-cost physical activity. An innovative partnership was created between the local golf course, the town and library to permit cross country skiing and snowshoeing on the golf course grounds. The golf

course identified the location of the cross country tracks and the town provided signs and promotion. In the first winter, skiers could access the front nine holes. The following winter, the ski tracks were expanded to all eighteen holes. Vulcan's successful cross-country skiing initiative was highlighted in the Winter 2018 edition of AHS's Apple magazine.

The team purchased two sets of adult and two sets of youth snowshoes available on loan through the local library. In the first winter, the snowshoes were loaned out five times, for 21 days each, translating into continuous usage throughout the ski season. Based on the demand, the loan period was shortened to ten days the following winter to increase accessibility of the snowshoes.

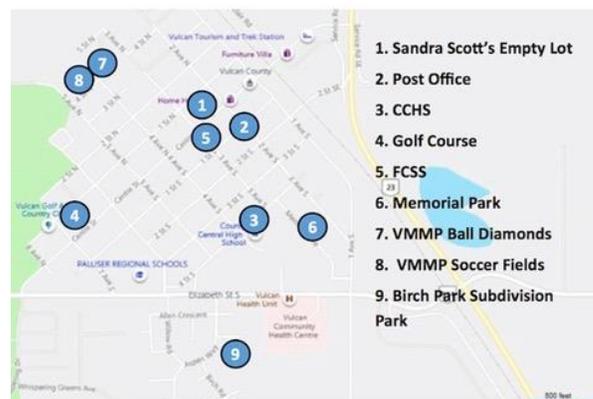
To encourage walking, the coalition worked with the town to purchase six portable, outdoor signs to promote healthy living messages. The signs could be rotated onto various pathways and locations throughout the community. The town stored the signs when not in use, coordinated the messages and set-up at the location. In all, the signs were used to promote the healthy food initiative, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing activities, and a bike rack initiative mentioned next.

Energized by their early successes, the coalition turned their focus to making Vulcan a bike-friendly community. Residents observed that many people were biking in the community, but a lack of bike racks was likely preventing people from biking for transportation rather than for recreation only. Initial discussion with the town confirmed that the town would support bike rack installations throughout the community. A coalition member investigated potential bike rack suppliers while other team members completed a visual assessment of the community to identify high priority locations. The selected bike rack vendor developed a bike rack that would incorporate the coalition's logo into the design. Coalition members provided a list of public locations to the town for approval. The group also approached business property owners about installing the racks at high traffic business locations. Bike racks were ultimately installed at nine locations, and, due to an ordering error from the vendor, the community will have five additional racks to install at future locations in the town or county.



## HELPING TO MAKE VULCAN A BIKEABLE COMMUNITY

NEW BIKE RACKS WILL BE  
INSTALLED SOON AT THESE  
LOCATIONS IN VULCAN!



To launch the bike racks, the coalition worked with the town, local schools and peace officers to give away certificates for bike helmets and other prizes.

### **Community leadership: Raise awareness of ACT 4 Health through community events**

Early on, coalition members identified the importance of creating community awareness of ACT 4 Health and its various activities. The group believed awareness of its efforts was critical to coalition sustainability. ACT 4 Health developed a mission, vision and logo and purchased pull up banners and signs for use at community events. To establish the coalition as a leader in community wellness and to recognize the group's additional cancer prevention activities, the coalition hosted a Health Canada chemicals awareness workshop. ACT 4 Health was an active participant in a United Way Poverty Simulation event hosted by FCSS and connected with many community members and other social and community agencies at the "Who Ya Gonna Call?" event. The "Who Ya Gonna Call?" event was designed to link community residents to the supports and resources available locally.

Additionally, the Vulcan County health and wellness foundation sought feedback from ACT 4 Health on developing the wellness centre at the Vulcan hospital.

The coalition also hosted a very well attended Community Cancer Prevention dashboard presentation

with over 40 attendees. The dashboard event invited the community to learn about ACT 4 Health's work and provide feedback on identified priorities.

Although the coalition also identified UV awareness as a key priority, a lack of sunscreen dispensers and sunscreen from the approved Canadian vendor prevented this initiative from moving forward in 2019. It remains on the coalition's action plan for the Summer of 2020.



### Community connections: Enhance community connection and belonging while reducing social isolation

The critical importance of community connections and a sense of belonging was woven throughout all of ACT 4 Health work. Creating gathering places, increasing opportunities for interaction and fostering individuals to engage in the community drove the rationale for the coalition's work. With ACPLF facilitator support, the coalition investigated an Abundant Communities approach, resulting in a spin off initiative led by FCSS. The spin-off aligned with a parallel opportunity offered by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta branch to participate in a rural mental health project, where FCSS provided a staff member for training as a rural animator. The Vulcan County early childhood development coalition led opportunities for families with children to connect at numerous community events and became a valued partner with ACT 4 Health.

All of the relationship building and actions in other priority areas led to developing a social inclusion initiative to address isolation. The coalition developed a door hanger containing information about the coalition, the health risks of social isolation and where residents could reach out for to help and connection. Working with Wheat County Special Needs, the door hangers will be delivered to approximately 900 households in Vulcan. The coalition also developed a script for the individuals delivering the hangers to answer residents' questions. The door hangers are just the start of an ongoing initiative to encourage social inclusion in the community.



# Vulcan's milestones



## 2016/2017

ACT 4 Health forms, creates logo and establishes numerous partnerships. Team completes healthy community assessments, sets priorities, creates action and evaluation plans; X-C skiing at golf course on front nine



## January – June 2017

Purchase coalition banners and signage. Partnerships established for Healthy Foods initiative; Dashboard demo, container gardening presentation



## July - December 2017

Identify bike rack locations and receive town approval; install outdoor walking signs, Healthy Food signs and pamphlet rack at Market Street; X-C skiing expands to back 9; town maps show ski trail; snowshoes available for loan at library



## January – June 2018

Healthy Food initiative generates over \$1300 for the food bank; bike racks ordered; poverty simulation workshop



## July - December 2018

Vendor error delays bike rack order. Chemicals workshop; "Who ya gonna call" event held



## January – June 2019

Bike racks installed; Sponsor of healthy food options at Tinman Triathlon; develop and approve coalition sustainability structure; launch social inclusion project

# Building community capacity

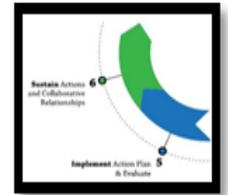
Capacity refers to individual, organizational, or community resources that help a team to act on locally identified priorities. At the beginning of the project, the Vulcan team assessed community capacity by using the Community Capacity Building Tool. Developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the tool measures capacity through nine different community features (shown in Figure 2). The team used the tool to compare changes in community capacity from start to finish. Figure 2 shows Vulcan’s before and after community capacity results for each of the nine features. At the beginning, Vulcan’s capacity score came in at *just started* and, *on the road* for the majority of the features. Later, the team’s capacity increased to *we’re there* in almost every feature. The difference in size between the larger orange shape and the smaller blue shape in the diagram below represents the growth in community capacity over the course of the project. By the end of the project, Vulcan had increased its capacity to facilitate continuous action on health initiatives.



**Figure 2. Community capacity results before and after participating in the pilot project (PHAC)**

<sup>1</sup> Each supportive environment feature was measured on a set of questions outlined in the SUCCESS tool. Overall, percentages cited are based on the average score of the number of questions answered for each feature. Features that show neither before or after data are due to respondents not answering that section in the tool. Questions not answered in a feature are not included in the average percentage calculations.

# SUCCESS Tool results<sup>12</sup>



*“Yea, and I think the grocery store having the Healthy Choices Award. We have a lot of people who come in to our community for sporting events and quite often they go over to our grocery store, and they see the little card that says, this is the healthy choice as well as the display that we have there. And so, we can’t measure who it is impacting but obviously when you go in there quite often those healthy choices, that shelf is quite empty or there are just a few items left, and they are stocking it. So, you know that people are purchasing it. I think possibly because of those little cards.”*

- Act 4 Health member

The core team used the Supportive Community Cancer Environment Assessment (SUCCESS) Tool to measure changes in physical and social environments within the community’s three priority focus areas (UV protection, healthy eating and physical activity). Changes were measured before and after project implementation. The tool contained questions to help the community understand the extent to which the various settings support health through policy, accessibility, availability, affordability, education, and promotional strategies.

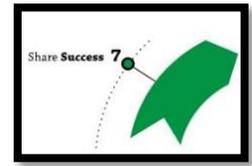
There was a perceived overall six percent increase in aspects that support healthy eating (Figure 3). The team believed that actions taken were highly beneficial in the creation and strengthening of partnerships. The areas with the highest increases were policy and education to support healthy eating showing a 24 percent and 30 percent increase, respectively. The partnerships with the local grocery store and the food bank, along with the health messaging signs around town are evidence of the great work enhancing the availability and awareness of

<sup>2</sup> The SUCCESS & PHAC tools are self-reported tool. Results are based on a team’s perceptions which can change over time based on an increase in knowledge. Although we may not see changes in supportive environment or community capacity scores on scales, what is important is the community’s ability to develop its capacity to work-together to develop healthier environments.

healthy eating in the community, which will hopefully influence awareness of healthy food for years to come.

Finally, results from the SUCCESS tool show an overall perceived 21 percent increase in aspects that support physical activity in the Vulcan community (Figure 4). Due to the actions towards making Vulcan a bike-friendly community the areas of greatest change are policy and affordability with 40 percent increases in both.

## Sharing success stories

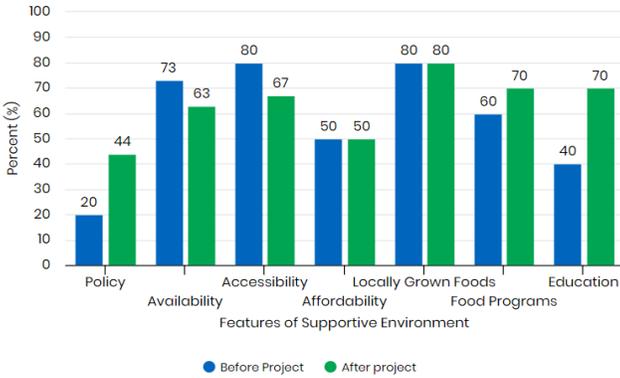


*“I think it will be interesting to see how the bike racks are utilized as soon as they finish painting the stall and if it actually gets people thinking to be more active and to grab their bike rather than the car, because the community is such a big car community, to drive a block.”*

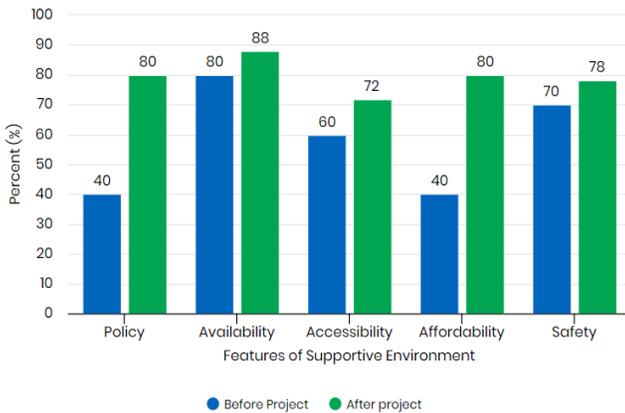
- Act 4 Health member

The results of the Vulcan pilot demonstrate the significant impact a group of community members, representing different sectors and perspectives, can have on their community environments. The process of working through the *Road to Success* Comprehensive Community Cancer Prevention Project; in particular, the multi-sectoral partnerships created as a result of various initiatives undertaken and the subsequent sharing of their story in the community, are key factors that led to Vulcan’s success.

The ACPLF facilitator led ACT 4 Health in a facilitated conversation about coalition sustainability. Despite being a newly formed team, the coalition developed an extensive action plan, and the group was eager to continue their work. ACT 4 Health members identified their key roles as concept generators, partnership brokers, communications catalysts, and community connectors. Discussions with the organizations around the table identified backbone partners who were willing to support the coalition in their continued efforts, as well as how existing activities could be brought under the ACT 4 Health umbrella. The AHS zone community development coordinator received manager approval to provide support to the coalition, and Rainbow Literacy and Learning Society agreed to act as the coalition’s fiscal agent. A sustainability structure was developed that identified the roles and responsibilities of each partner.



**Figure 4. Supportive environment results from the SUCCESS tool for healthy eating before and after participating in the pilot project**



**Figure 5. Supportive environment results from the SUCCESS tool for physical activity before and after participating in the pilot project**

NEW! ACPLF has launched the Alberta Healthy Communities Hub – a virtual gathering place designed to help communities connect, share, learn about and take action on building healthier communities.

<https://albertahealthycommunities.healthiertogether.ca/>

- Read Vulcan’s success stories featured in the Get Inspired section
- Access tools and resources
- Take action through evidence-based strategies
- Get inspired by community stories
- Learn more about Alberta and your community through the Community Health Data Dashboard and the Community Profiles

