



**Department of
Health**

Creating Healthy
Communities (CHC)



Community Ambassador Resource Guide

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What is a community ambassador?



A community ambassador is an individual who serves as the voice of a community. They act as a liaison between community members and government, local organizations, or coalition(s).¹⁻⁷ Community ambassadors promote and advocate for a community's well-being. Roles of a community ambassador within the Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program may include, but are not limited to:

- Facilitating communication between community members and community organizations and coalitions.
- Informing organizations and coalitions of the needs and wants of community members.
- Guiding organizations and coalitions in making decisions about planning, developing, and implementing policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes to improve food access and active living.
- Raising awareness of community strategies and programs supported by the CHC program.
- Connecting community members with information on services, programs, and other resources.

Why do we need community ambassadors?

Community ambassadors amplify residents' lived experiences, allowing organizations to understand the nuance behind community members' day-to-day experiences. They help organizations connect to residents, and thus, help shape and tailor the planning, development, and implementation of PSE changes to best reflect the community's needs and readiness. Having a community voice meaningfully engaged and woven into the group at the decision-making table is key to community engagement and program sustainability.



When community stakeholders are brought into a decision-making process, an organization is **laying the groundwork for more inclusivity and impact.**⁴

Highline Network, a grassroots organization dedicated to equitable community development.

What can community ambassadors do?

Community ambassador duties can vary but may include:

- Promoting community events and initiatives. For example, a community ambassador may pass out fliers or develop social media announcements to promote upcoming farmers' markets, community gardens, new bike routes, or green space additions.
- Engaging and encouraging participation in opportunities that will benefit their community. For example, a community ambassador may engage a neighborhood grocery or corner store owner to participate in a Healthy Food Retail program (see section: Snapshots of Community Ambassador Programs on page 10).
- Advocating for their community's needs and best interests. For example, a community ambassador may put together a photovoice project. A photovoice, the process of using images as a tool to reflect a community's strengths and concerns, is one of many activities that community ambassadors can engage in to help advocate for their community.⁸



Community Ambassadors can improve positive community outcomes and inform the planning and implementation of new strategies.

Community Ambassador Roles



Building trust and relationships:

Community ambassadors help build trust between communities and organizations by fostering relationships and promoting communication. They act as a bridge between the community and the organization, helping to facilitate understanding and collaboration.



Advocating for the community:

Community ambassadors serve as a voice for their community, sharing their community's interests and concerns with the organization. They work to ensure that the community's needs are met and that their hopes for their community are heard.



Creating a sense of belonging:

Community ambassadors help create a sense of belonging and inclusivity within the community. They work to ensure that community members' contributions are valued and that decisions are made collectively, with the community's best interests in mind.



Promoting engagement and participation by activating the community:

Community ambassadors help make programs and events more approachable and accessible. They encourage community members to participate in events, activities, and initiatives.



Providing resources and support:

Community ambassadors may provide or help to connect community members to information, resources, and support.

I'm interested in community ambassadors. **Where** do I start?

As with any strategy, careful and considerate planning is needed to ensure successful implementation and sustainability. A community ambassador strategy will need to be tailored to each community's unique needs. Below are the main considerations to help guide planning efforts.

1. Develop a Plan



A plan for community ambassadors should be informed by an initial community needs assessment to best reflect the community's needs. Based on this assessment, goals and outcomes can be identified to:

- Clarify expectations by clearly defining roles and responsibilities of a community ambassador and answering the following questions:
 - What is expected?
 - What are community ambassadors responsible for?
 - What should community ambassadors expect in return?
- Explain guidelines and standards to operations, including conduct, behavior, and communication.
- Detail a framework for evaluation to ensure the program is meeting objectives.
- Ensure that ambassadors will be made aware of the outcomes of their work (share program outcomes, end-of-year reports, etc.) and that their contributions will be reflected in the policy, systems, and environmental changes proposed and implemented.

2. Identify Funding



Providing compensation recognizes the importance of the community ambassador's role and the time and effort it takes to be an effective advocate for their community. Funding streams can come from federal or local government grants like AmeriCorps, foundations, or partnerships with local organizations like The Rotary Foundation. CHC funds can also be used to compensate community ambassadors for their time.

3. Develop a Recruitment Strategy



When recruiting, it is important to identify what your program needs and who best could help engage community members. Ask the question: What personality traits do our community members respect and value? In most cases, community ambassadors will share the following characteristics:

- A person who lives in the community.
- A person who likes engaging with their neighbors and meeting new people.
- A person who has a desire to improve the lives of all community members.

Is prior experience necessary?

When recruiting, it is important to highlight that prior community advocacy experience may not be needed. Interpersonal skills and motivation to improve the community's well-being should take precedence over academic achievements or work experience since community ambassadors will receive training before engaging in program activities.

How about compensation?

When recruiting, it is important to highlight that community ambassadors will receive compensation for their commitment and dedication to the program. Payment or stipends for their engagement will vary from program to program but should be aligned with the program's responsibilities and the time commitment required for the role. See the table below for examples of different payment strategies pulled from various community ambassador programs across the United States.

Community Ambassador Compensation Examples

American Journalism Project¹

Payment: \$20 per hour

Time commitment: Up to five hours a week

Duration: Approximately eight to 10 weeks

More details:

- Ambassadors can earn up to \$1000, but in coordinators' experiences, most ambassadors work fewer expected hours a week, so the total cost per ambassador is closer to \$400.
- Budget for the time and capacity it takes to run the program. In their experience, the hiring process takes the most time (American Journal Project, 2020).

For more information, visit: <https://www.theajp.org/news-insights/insights/our-guide-to-developing-a-community-ambassador-program-that-can-help-local-newsrooms-better-serve-their-communities/>.

Community Ambassador Compensation Examples (Continued)

Neighborhood Action Development Team¹²

Payment: \$2,500 a year

Time commitment: Attend monthly meetings with city staff, and help to get the word out about programs

Duration: One year

More details: Includes additional funds for translation services and community events.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.cpradio.org/articles/2022/11/23/sacramento-hopes-to-pay-community-ambassadors-to-advise-on-policy-help-with-outreach/>.

Lafitte Greenway Community Ambassador Program⁴

Payment: \$500

Time commitment: Four to eight hours per month

Duration: Six months

More details: During this time, ambassadors engage in training, community outreach, monthly meetings, and other activities to solve a problem or meet a community need. (Highline Network, n.d.)

For more information, visit: [https://live-](https://live-highlinenetwork.pantheonsite.io/case-studies/setting-up-a-community-ambassador-program/)

[highlinenetwork.pantheonsite.io/case-studies/setting-up-a-community-ambassador-program/](https://live-highlinenetwork.pantheonsite.io/case-studies/setting-up-a-community-ambassador-program/).

For recommendations to help guide the process of determining compensation or stipend amount for your community's ambassador role, see Appendix 2.

4. Develop Recruitment Materials



Recruitment materials promote the strategy's initiatives and efforts and recognize the needs and culture of the community. Recruitment materials may include promotional flyers, social media posts, radio announcements, and/or billboards. Recruitment materials share the **job description** and other information related to hiring like the **application** and the **interview process**.

Job Description

A **job description** should describe the role and general responsibilities of the community ambassador, program details including information about stipends or compensation, eligibility requirements, and instructions on how to apply for the position.

The following page includes an example of a job description developed for the Lafitte Greenway Community Ambassador Program.⁵

Example job description:

Role Description

Ambassadors are a diverse group of dedicated community leaders from each of the Greenway's neighboring communities who:

- Share information about the Greenway, and its programs and events with neighbors, community members, and trail users.
- Gather ideas about the Greenway from their neighbors.
- Represent the Greenway at community gatherings, meetings, and events.
- Shape the future of the Lafitte Greenway.

Program Details

Ambassadors are the link between Friends of Lafitte Greenway and the Greenway's neighborhoods. They dedicate about four to eight hours per month during the duration of the program. The program includes:

1. Training – Ambassadors receive extensive training about the Greenway's history, features, and future; stormwater management features that reduce flooding; and community organizing skills.
2. Community Engagement Activities – Each Ambassador leads one community outreach activity of their choosing each month. Examples: Give a presentation to your church about the Greenway, lead a tour of the Greenway, pass out flyers for free fitness classes, find volunteers for an event on the Greenway, etc.
3. Monthly Meet-Ups – Once a month, Ambassadors meet up to share knowledge and updates, build skills, and plan upcoming events and activities.
4. Ambassador Project – Ambassadors work together to direct part of the Greenway's budget to solve a problem or meet a community need.
5. Stipend : Ambassadors receive a stipend of \$500 for their time, made in monthly payments throughout the program.

Eligibility Requirements

We're looking for five to six Ambassadors who:

- Live, work, or have strong community ties in one or more of the neighborhoods along the Lafitte Greenway (French Quarter, Iberville, Tremé/Lafitte, Tulane-Gravier, Lower Mid-City, Mid-City, Faubourg St. John, or Navarre).
- Love talking to their neighbors and meeting new people.
- Love to be outside, and are passionate about inspiring the community to get outside and get active.
- Are interested in building healthy communities and a healthy environment.

Instructions on How to Apply

Fill out the application form on the back of this sheet by [date].

- Submit completed application form online or in person at [location].

Applications and Interview Guides

Hiring community ambassadors may include an **application process** and an **interview**.

Below, see examples of application and interview questions that were used for the Lafitte Greenway Ambassadors Program.⁵



Example interview questions:

1. Are you available during the following mandatory meetings?
2. What do you like best about the [community]?
3. What changes, support, resources, or opportunities does the community need the most?
4. Why are you a good fit for this position?
5. What are you involved with in your community? Describe your current, previous, or future community involvement through volunteer, work, school, or other experiences.
6. Why are you interested in becoming an ambassador? What sort of impact do you hope to make through your work as an ambassador?
7. Why is community-focused work meaningful to you?

Next Steps After Hiring: **Orientation and Training.**

Training and orientation are vital to all jobs, and it is especially important for new community ambassadors. After hiring, support community ambassadors by:

Reviewing goals and expectations.



- A review of goals and expectations can be conducted at a post-hire individual meeting.
- During this meeting, ensure that the community ambassador understands their role and responsibilities as well as expectations.
- During this meeting, encourage the community ambassador to ask any immediate questions or concerns they may have.

Facilitating orientation and training.



- Orientations and trainings provide community ambassadors with the knowledge, skills, and tools to meet strategy objectives.
- Orientation and training materials may include but are not limited to:
 - An overview of the CHC program's history and objectives.
 - Information and resources about the community context and community needs.
 - A detailed and tailored description of community ambassadors' roles and responsibilities.
 - An opportunity for the team to get to know one another.
 - Sessions focused on outreach and leadership development, and/or specific focus area knowledge and skills development.

Providing ongoing support.



- Community ambassadors thrive when they receive regular support and guidance from a team or support person. A support team will guide community ambassadors on how to carry out their roles effectively. Support may include:
 - Providing feedback.
 - Providing coaching and professional development.
 - Resolving or troubleshooting problems, questions, or concerns that may arise.

Snapshots of Community Ambassador Programs

Interested in learning more about other community ambassador strategies in Ohio and across the country? Check out these program snapshots!

The Lafitte Greenway Community Ambassador Program^{4, 5}



Location: New Orleans, Louisiana

Focus Area: Active living

The Lafitte Greenway Community Ambassador Program began in 2016 to engage people across all neighborhoods in using the Lafitte Greenway, a bicycle and pedestrian path and park that opened in New Orleans in 2015.

The program recruits four to six ambassadors each year. They are recruited through an open call and complete an application and interview process. Ambassadors are paid \$500 for their participation. For about six months, four to eight hours per month, ambassadors engage in training, community outreach, monthly meetings, and lead an ambassador-led project to solve a problem or meet a community need.

For more **details** on the **Greenway Community Ambassador Program** and access to an **application template**, visit the following website:

<https://www.lafittegreenway.org/ambassadors>.

For more information on “**Setting up a Community Ambassador Program**” provided by the Greenway Community Ambassador Program, visit: <https://toolkit.highlinenetwork.org/case-studies/setting-up-a-community-ambassador-program/>.



FreshLink Ambassadors⁹



Location: Cleveland, Ohio

Focus Area: Increase the use of SNAP benefits at farmers' market

"FreshLink Ambassador Model leverages neighborhood residents (ambassadors) to encourage the use of SNAP (food stamps) at local farmers' markets."

FreshLink was a five-year research project that aimed at increasing healthy food access in Cleveland and East Cleveland, Ohio through peer-to-peer outreach. The program followed the FreshLink Ambassador Model and engaged trusted community members to spread the word about farmers' markets and the Produce Perks incentive program.

Each ambassador participated in a series of trainings which were developed and provided by the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods. Ambassadors were also provided with a support team, becoming experts on the benefits of farmers' markets in their communities. In 2017, the Fresh Link program, powered by Fresh Link Ambassadors, resulted in more than a 10% increase in the use of SNAP benefits by customers at participating farmers' markets in Cleveland, Ohio.

"They [Fresh Link Ambassadors] meet people where they are, connecting with neighbors at community events to raise awareness about farmers' markets and SNAP incentives..."
(Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods, 2020a)

For an overview of the FreshLink Program and its phases and methodology as well as access to **FreshLink Ambassador Toolkits**, including a **training curriculum**, **training sessions**, an **ambassador workbook**, and an **ambassador employment handbook**, please visit: <http://prchn.org/freshlink/>.



The Healthy Food Retail Initiative¹⁰



Location: Cleveland, Ohio

Focus Area: Food retail

The Healthy Food Retail Initiative, which began in 2009 as the “Cleveland Corner Store Project,” strives to increase access to healthy foods, especially in food deserts, or where residents rely on convenience or corner stores for basic food needs. As part of this initiative, the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (PRCHN) and grant partners collaborate with convenience and corner store owners to add healthier items to their inventories. Throughout the years, the program has focused on community engagement efforts, which led to the hiring of two community health ambassadors. Below is an excerpt from a conference presentation that highlights the success of the community ambassador component of the program:

“Some community health interventions and programs are designed and implemented without strong, active partnerships with those most affected by the health inequities these organizations seek to address. This lack of community engagement affects the success and impact of these programs as their design and implementation is not tailored to local needs or culturally competent. The Food Trust is a national leader in healthy retail programs in low-income communities that improve the availability and awareness of healthy foods in corner stores. In Cleveland, The Food Trust has worked with key partners to train resident leaders, known as community ambassadors, that work in partnership with small food retailers to assess store inventory, conduct customer surveys to identify healthy options most in demand, connect store owners to distributors of healthy foods and fresh produce, and organize outreach events to promote healthy changes at the store out in the community. This approach has led to the development of a network of twenty stores offering healthier food options and fresh produce with each store’s program designed to meet the needs of the residents of their communities. In 2018, The Food Trust utilized this approach to develop and support healthy food retail community ambassador programs with local partners in three additional cities; Indianapolis, Philadelphia, and San Jose.”¹¹

For more information on the Healthy Retail Initiative, visit: <http://prchn.org/hfr/>.



Transportation Ambassador Program¹¹



Location: Columbus, Ohio

Focus Area: Active transportation

Columbus Public Health and Toole Design developed a Transportation Ambassador program to address transportation disparities by encouraging active transportation, especially by bicycle and bus, and educating community members on how to get to places without a car. Community ambassadors played an important role in achieving this goal. Upon completion of 30 hours of training, community ambassadors provided community members with individual and group support, and taught community members about:

- Bicycle safety.
- Bus travel tips.
- Route planning.

In three years (2020, 2021, 2022), the program engaged 314 community members, topping its overall goal of reaching 230 people.

For more information about this program and how to develop and implement a Transportation Ambassador Program in your community, visit: <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/health-promotion/resources/travel-ambassador-toolkit>.



Appendix 1.

Types of Community Ambassadors

There are many types of community ambassadors including community health workers, peer leaders, and community mentors. Regardless of the position title, persons recruited to serve as a bridge between community members and organizations ultimately want to improve their community and the well-being of residents.

While a community ambassador within the Creating Healthy Communities program may have different roles and responsibilities than a peer leader or a Community Health Worker, collaboration with persons holding these positions (see table below) can be an important strategy to expand services and reach a larger network of community members. For example, a community ambassador promoting an upcoming healthy cooking class or the launch of a community garden may benefit from partnering with a local Community Health Worker whose goal is to enroll residents in health insurance and connect clients to health services and related activities. Likewise, a peer leader whose goal is to spread awareness and knowledge of interpersonal violence and provide support services to survivors of interpersonal violence may benefit from partnering with a community ambassador who is working on the planning or development of a new food pantry location. **Community ambassadors with varying roles working together help to eliminate silos of work and increase awareness and access to services.**

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS



“The American Public Health Association defines a Community Health Worker as “A frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to **facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.** A community

health worker also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.”²

PEER EDUCATORS OR PEER LEADERS



Peer educators or peer leaders are members of the same targeted community,

whether that be due to similarities in age, lived experiences, or other unique qualities. **They may work with community members individually or in groups, provide guidance, and help resolve problems.**¹³

COMMUNITY MENTORS



Community mentors often **provide social support and capacity building to**

empower community members with the skills and knowledge to help them thrive. Mentoring support is usually tailored to specific program objectives and the community context.¹⁴

COMMUNITY OR PEER ADVOCATES



Community or peer advocates are **trained in outreach and education,** particularly in

strengthening social support, teaching advocacy behaviors in seeking health care, navigating treatment systems, or facilitating connections between providers and populations with specific physical or behavioral health needs.¹⁵

Appendix 2.

Compensation Estimate Toolkit

A clear understanding of program responsibilities and time commitment will be needed to determine fair, competitive compensation rates for community ambassadors. Additionally, it is important to consider inflation rates when determining payments or stipends.

Compensation Estimate Toolkit

- Determine an estimated number of hours of engagement expected per month to reach program or position objectives.
- Determine the duration of the ambassador program. This may be done on a year-by-year basis and driven in part by overall program objectives, grant funding cycles, and/or local fiscal/funding years.
- Identify an average hourly rate in the city, town, or county for similar positions. Community ambassadors may be a new position or role and as a result, there may not be much guidance on hourly rates or compensation. We recommend looking at the hourly rates and compensation structures for similar positions that may be in the community, such as community health workers. It also is important to benchmark against retail positions and hourly rates.
- Total compensation can be calculated with this formula:

$$\text{Compensation} = \text{Average hourly rate} \times \text{Number of hours of engagement per month} \times \text{Number of months}$$

Appendix 3.

Additional Resources

Setting up a Community Ambassador Program	
Highline Network ⁴	https://toolkit.highlinenetwork.org/case-studies/setting-up-a-community-ambassador-program/
The American Journalism Project ¹	https://www.theajp.org/news-insights/insights/our-guide-to-developing-a-community-ambassador-program-that-can-help-rebuild-local-news/
Examples of Applications for Community Ambassador Hiring	
Lafitte Greenway Ambassador Program ^{4,5}	https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lffHi1HV1Zg5zLF0p0zL5maHuVctIVJnX3224B0sDOs/edit
Partners for Community Wellness ¹⁶	https://dhmc.wufoo.com/forms/z7jmjrd1gc19gs/
Community Health Ambassador Application, Virginia Department of Health ¹⁷	https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/VAVDHORCE/signup/23072
Examples of Training Curriculum and Toolkits	
"FreshLink Ambassador Toolkits", Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods ⁹	http://prchn.org/toolkits/
"Community Ambassadors Hub", Virginia Department of Health ¹⁷	https://www.covidcommunityambassadors.com/

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