



Diabetes Free South Carolina  
2024 Annual Meeting

# The Power of Community Engagement

Aundrea Loftley, MD



No relevant disclosures



# Objectives



- Define the relationship between health equity and community engagement
- Discuss the role DFSC is playing in creating community partnerships and reducing gaps in health disparities
- Discuss guiding principles for community engagement
- Describe the impact and benefits of engagement in 3 domains: community, institutional and individual



“

Better is possible. It does not take genius. It takes diligence. It takes moral clarity. It takes ingenuity. And above all, it takes a willingness to try.

”

**Atul Gawande, *Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance***



FAT CAT



SHADY LANE



# What is Equity?



Equity is the absence of unfair, avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically or by other dimensions of inequality (e.g. sex, gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation).

– World Health Organization



<https://clipartmag.com/social-health-clipart>

# What is Health Equity?



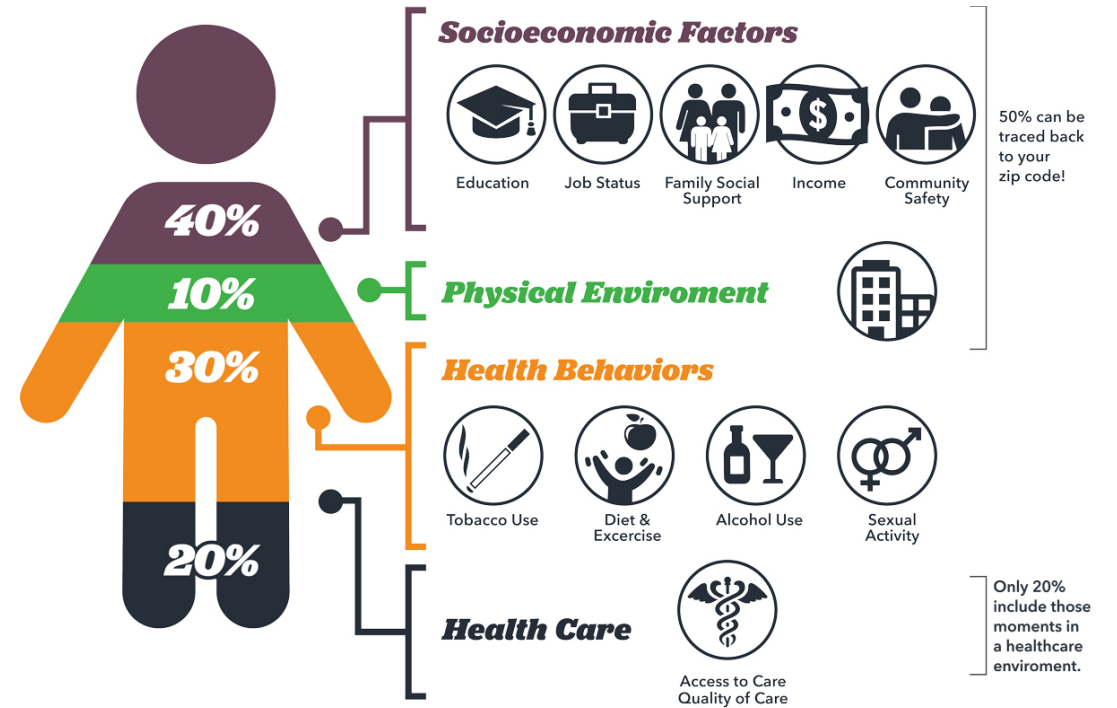
The concept that everyone should be able to obtain the highest level of health possible and should not be disadvantaged because of socially determined circumstances.

– World Health Organization

# Social Determinates of Health

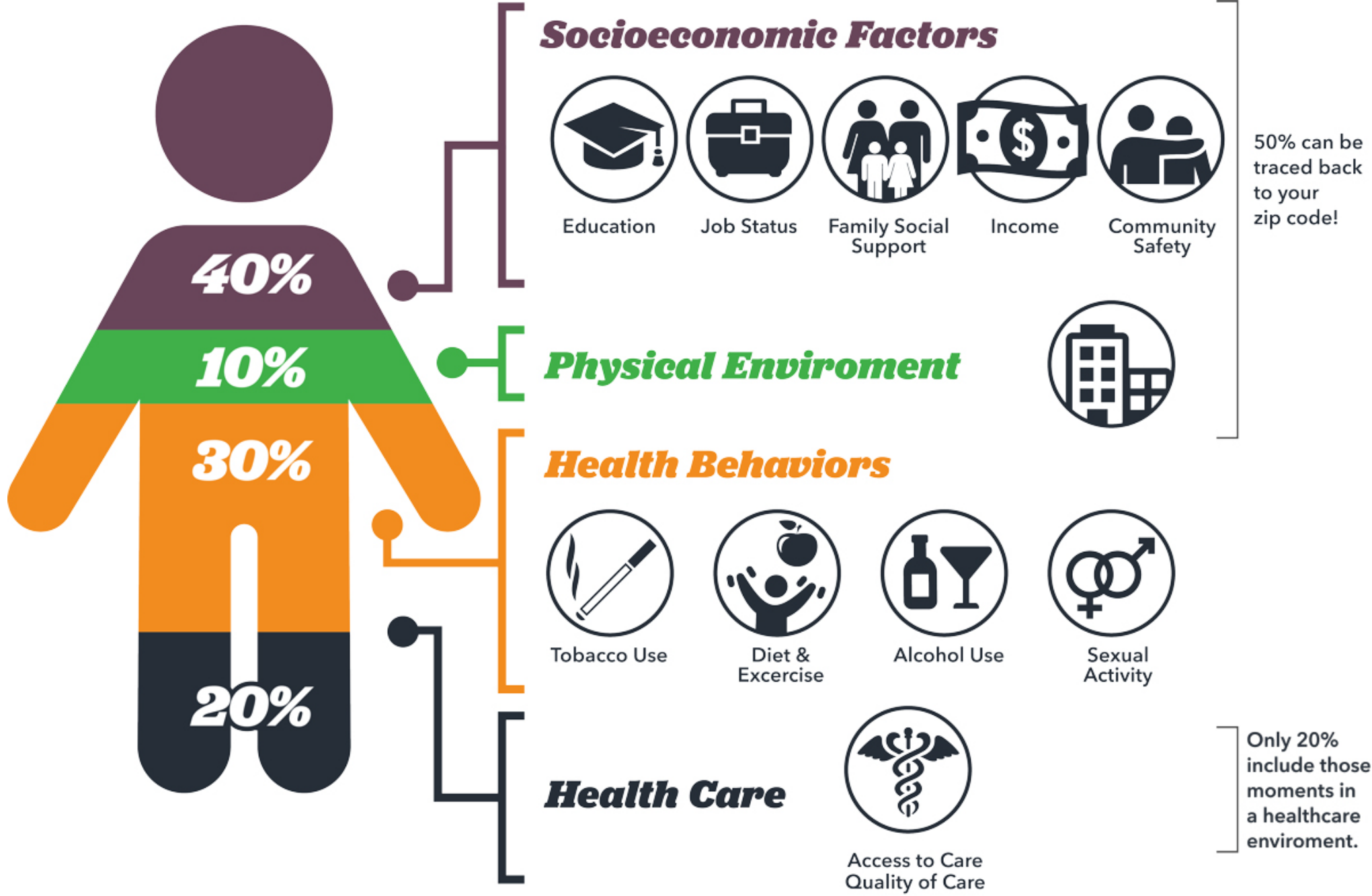


Health and Health equity are influenced by the social determinates of health (SDH)

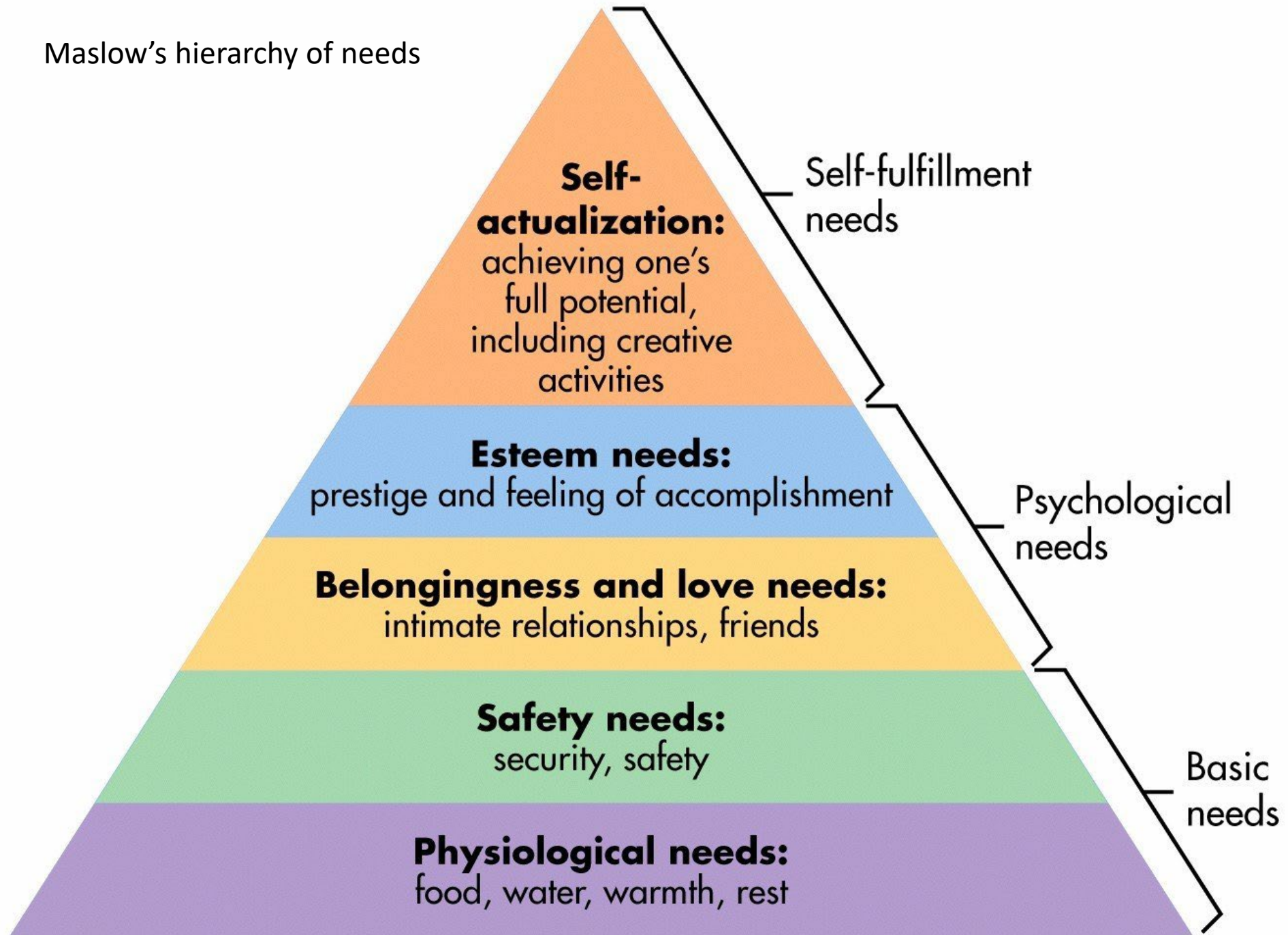


Source: Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement, Going Beyond Clinical Walls: Solving Complex Problems (October 2014)





Maslow's hierarchy of needs



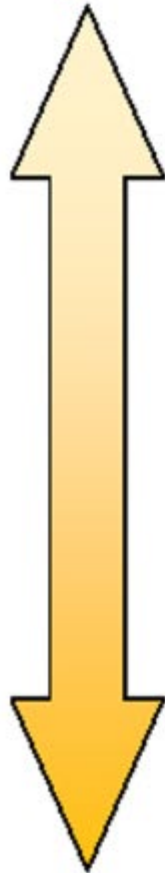
# CDC Health Impact Pyramid

*Factors that Affect Health*



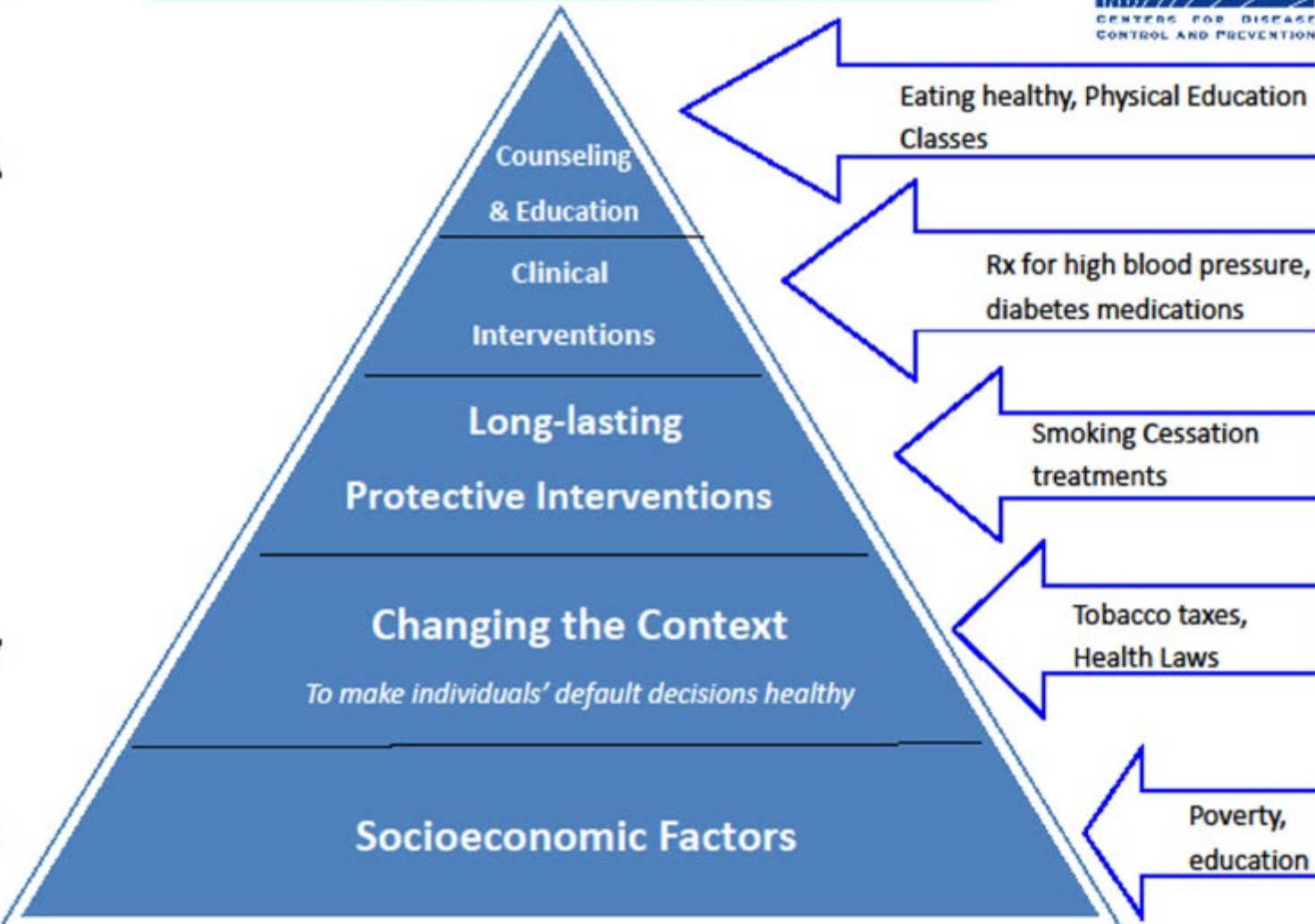
Smallest

Impact



Largest

Impact



Source: Frieden, T. A Framework for Public Health Action: The Health Impact Pyramid. *Am J Public Health*. 2010; April; 100(4): 590–595.



The role DFSC is playing in creating community partnerships



# What is Community Engagement?



“A process of developing relationships that enable stakeholders to work together to address health-related issues and promote well-being to achieve positive health impact and outcomes.” – World Health Organization

# Interconnection

## Health Equity & Community Engagement



### **Empowerment**

- Community engagement empowers individuals to take an active role in their health and well-being.
- When communities are engaged, they can voice their needs and concerns, leading to more equitable health solutions.

### **Trust Building**

- Ongoing engagement helps build trust between health organizations and communities, which is essential for effective public health interventions

### **Enhanced Understanding of Needs**

- Community engagement helps identify specific health needs and barriers

### **Tailored Interventions**

- Solutions developed with community input are more effective and culturally relevant

### **Increased Access to Resources**

- Engaged communities can better mobilize resources and support networks

# Features of Successful Engagement



## **Mutual Benefit**

- A fundamental aspect of any successful collaboration is that it should benefit both the sponsor/institution and the community.

# Features of Successful Engagement

## Mutual Benefit



What does this look like: **DFSC sponsored Surgical Quality initiative**

- Implementation of the **SC Surgical Quality Collaborative** to improve general surgery outcomes
  - Prevention of wound infections, more rapid recovery, better pain control, and lower risk of returning to the hospital
  - Immediate and longitudinal health and economic benefits for **patients and health systems**



# Features of Successful Engagement

## Mutual Benefit



What does this look like: **DFSC sponsored Management of Maternal Diabetes (MOMS) program**

- 2,325 deliveries (July 2020-July 2024)
- Implementation of the MOMs program has been associated with fewer C-sections, NICU admissions, pre-term births and episodes of neonatal hypoglycemia, reduction in small for gestational age (SGA), and improved APGAR scores.
- Longitudinal health-related and economic benefits for **women and children.**
- Immediate and long-term economic benefits
  - cost savings for **c-sections (\$1.7 M/yr)** and **NICU admissions (\$29.5 M/yr)**

# Features of Successful Engagement



## Clear Communication

- Establishing clear lines of communication is crucial. Regular meetings and updates can help ensure everyone is aligned on goals and expectations.

# Features of Successful Engagement

## Clear Communication



What does this look like: a collaborative project between DFSC and an academic/clinical/community partner involves regular stakeholder meetings to discuss progress and adjust strategies.

# Features of Successful Engagement



## Shared Goals and Vision

- Successful collaborations often arise from a shared vision.

# Features of Successful Engagement

## Shared Goals and Vision



What does this look like: **DFSC sponsors an initiative to tackle food insecurity in the community by partnering with FoodShare SC**

- By bringing together community members and local organizations, all parties can contribute to a common goal
  - With DFSC support, **FoodShare SC** has **expanded from 7 to 22 hub sites**.
  - To date in 2023, almost **65,000 fresh produce boxes** have been distributed to South Carolinians.

# Features of Successful Engagement



## **Incorporating Diverse Perspectives**

- Involving diverse voices enhances the richness of the collaboration.
  - This diversity can foster innovative solutions that might not emerge in a more homogenous group.

# Features of Successful Engagement

## Incorporating Diverse Perspectives



What does this look like: **DFSC sponsored efforts engage clinicians, social workers and scientists to participate in community engagement initiatives**

Heterogenous with respect to education level, occupations, background, positionality and lived experiences.

- **DFSC partners with the Center for Community Health Alignment:** supports curriculum development and strategic integration of **Community Health Workers** into the diabetes prevention platform at FQHCs across the state

# Features of Successful Engagement



## **Sustainability and Longevity**

- Long-term impact often requires sustainability planning from the outset.
  - “Begin with the end in mind”



# Features of Successful Engagement

## Sustainability and Longevity



What does this look like: **Women transition from MOMs to Women's Health Initiative (WHI)**

- Improving health outcomes for women with diabetes during pregnancy, post-partum
- Optimizing diabetes care post-partum (pre-conception) in anticipation of future pregnancies
- Diabetes prevention

# Features of Successful Engagement



## Evaluation and Adaptation

- Effective collaborations incorporate evaluation mechanisms to assess their impact.
- Analogous to a scientist adjusting an experiment based on findings, community partnerships should be flexible and responsive to feedback.

# Features of Successful Engagement



## Evaluation

- What does this look like: If a community health initiative isn't achieving its desired outcomes, ongoing evaluation can help identify barriers and adjust strategies accordingly.

# Features of Successful Engagement



## Adaptation

- What does this look like: DFSC recognizes the need to **expand touchpoints for diabetes prevention**: sponsors programs to address diabetes prevention in children through providing funding for the expansion of **Kids in Parks**.

# Features of Successful Engagement



## Adaptation

- What does this look like: DFSC recognizes the need to **expand touchpoints for diabetes screening: partnership with Affinity Health Center: diabetes screenings in dental clinic**
  - Proactive approach
  - Historical approach has been reactive

# Challenges: Barriers to Engagement



- Mistrust
- Lack of representation
- Limited resources
- Taxation: on community members and partners
- Burnout
- Temptation to overpromise
- Goals of the project may overstretch the expertise/capacity of the team



# Solutions and Guiding Principles

Authentic Engagement



# Diabetes Free South Carolina



## Guiding Principles

- Implement an innovative, multi-pronged statewide program
- Align, develop and bring to scale existing programs that have proven local efficacy
- Reduce health disparities related to preventing diabetes and its complications
- Focus on diabetes prevention
- Focus on early life intervention to prevent or mitigate diabetes and its complications
- Ensure rigorous data collection
- Plan for the sustainability of initiative efforts

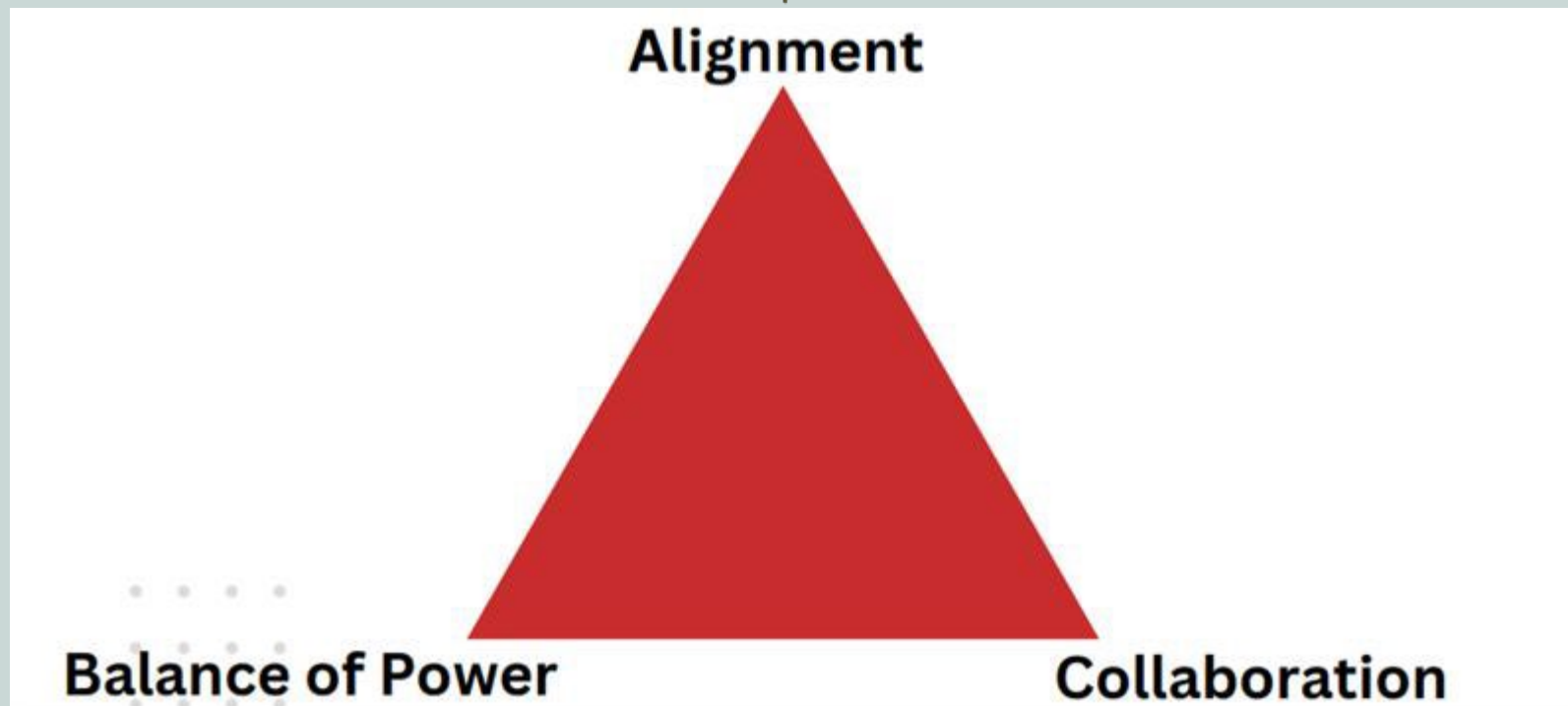


# Authentic Engagement: Guiding Principles



<b>Principle</b>	<b>Description</b>
Understand the community	Become knowledgeable about the community's culture (norms and values), social networks, economic conditions, political and power structures, and demographic trends, and its history and experiences with efforts by outside groups and past engagement activities
Maintain community ownership and control	Remember and accept that collective self-determination is the responsibility and right of all people in a community. Therefore, no external entity should assume it can bestow on a community the power to act in its own self-interest.
Have shared goal or vision for engagement	Be clear about the purposes for engagement or seeking partnership and work collaboratively to have a goal or vision that the community shares
Establish partnership	Establish a partnership with the community to create change and improve health
Be respectful	Recognize and respect the diversity within the community
Build trust	Build and maintain relationships and trust by working with individuals and/or key community leaders or connectors
Mobilize community assets	Identify and mobilize community assets and strengths through developing the community's capacity and resources to make decisions and take action
Be flexible and adaptable	Recognize that individuals and institutions must be flexible and adaptable to community priorities and changing conditions
Commit to a long-term partnership	Foster community collaboration and understand that community impact requires collective action across sectors in collaboration with members of the community with a long-term commitment among partners
Be trustworthy	Understand that being perceived as trustworthy (individually and organizationally) is essential for sustaining community engagement

# Authentic Engagement



Graphic credit: Yu, E. (2022). *Community engagement*. American Public Health Association.

# Authentic Engagement



## Define what community means

- Group of people, often defined by geographic area, race/ethnic groups, special interest, similar situations or lived experience with a condition

# Authentic Engagement



**Consider which levels and sectors are most pertinent to project objectives – identify stakeholders**

- Bring appropriate partners to the table
- Stakeholders should be mindful of their own experiences and positionality: including professional biases and identity-related influences
- Transparency to aid in the development of mutual trust and understanding

# Authentic Engagement



- Community engaged sponsors must be flexible: incorporate the perspectives of community members
- Power must be shared
- Feedback of community partners must be incorporated
  - Ensures viability and sustainability of the effort(s)

# We Must Have Courage



- Identify the problems
- Reduce community apathy about poor/mediocre health
- Equal prioritization of health outcomes
- Grass-roots, community-centered efforts to drive change
- Use our platforms to drive changes in culture and policy
- Change the approach to solving the problem (evaluation and adaptation)

# Courageous Authenticity Gives Us The Power To:



- **Build partnerships**
- **Ensure inclusive practices**
- **Sustain engagement efforts**
- **Transform obstacles into opportunities**



# Impact of Community Engagement

Three Domains: Community, Institution, & Individual





# The Impact of Engagement: Community Benefits



- Access to Resources
- Addressing Local Issues
- Capacity Building
- Increased Civic Participation
- Improved Quality of Life

# The Impact of Engagement: Institutional Benefits



- Mutual Benefits
- Social Capital
- Research Relevance

# The Impact of Engagement: Institutional Benefits



- Institutional Change and Development
- Funding and Support
- Long-Term Partnerships

# The Impact of Engagement: Individual Benefits



## Subjective Experience of Engagement

Majority of individuals actively involved in community engagement experienced positive benefits:

- Physical Health
- Emotional Health & Wellbeing
- Self-confidence & Self-esteem
- Social Relationships & Belonging
- Individual Empowerment
- *Community engagement is not always a positive experience*

# The Impact of Engagement On Health



- Mental Health Benefits
- Social Connections
- Physical Health Improvements
- Increased Life Satisfaction

# The Impact of Engagement On Health



- Cognitive Benefits
- Enhanced Resilience
- Development of Skills
- Community Well-Being



# Summary

Community engagement is essential for  
achieving health equity



Connecting  
Responsive  
WE can effect change together  
Safe space Conversation Feel seen  
Caring Decide together accountability  
Part of something bigger than myself  
Meet people where they are Reciprocity Consistent  
Exploring together Meaningful Feel heard  
**Community Engagement**  
Reciprocity Listening Co-create  
Relationship Learning Co-design  
Mutual benefit  
Brave space Being in community with  
Authenticity Mutual Sharing power  
Step into your POWER  
Building something together  
Accomplish something big





“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

African Proverb

