



SAN DIEGO COUNTY  
CHILDHOOD  
OBESITY  
INITIATIVE

SAN DIEGO COUNTY CHILDHOOD OBESITY INITIATIVE  
**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2025-30**



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# Who We Are

## Mission

The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (COI) is a multi-sector coalition with the mission of reducing and preventing childhood obesity by advancing policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change through collective impact.

## Vision

We envision healthy eating and active living resulting in optimal health and wellness for all children and families in the San Diego County region.



## Purpose

The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (COI) uses a collective impact model to:

- Coordinate and sustain countywide efforts to prevent and reduce childhood obesity
- Provide leadership and vision
- Create, support, and mobilize partnerships
- Provide outreach, advocacy, and education
- Assess and report on progress toward countywide goals

## Goals

1. **Healthy Food:** Increase access to healthy foods and beverages in a culturally appropriate manner.
2. **Physical Activity:** Increase opportunities for safe physical activity in an inclusive and culturally appropriate manner.
3. **Healthy People in Healthy Places:** Create and improve social, economic, service, institutional, and built environments that support healthy eating and active living.
4. **Operational Excellence:** Promote operational excellence of the Initiative.





# COI Priorities & Strategies

With community voices and perspectives at the forefront, the following priorities and strategies were developed based on discussions and outcomes from the 2025 COI Retreat. They align with the four COI goals and reflect a health equity and community-centered approach to advancing collective efforts to reduce and prevent childhood obesity.

## Goals

## Priority

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**Physical Activity  
Healthy People in  
Healthy Places**

Advance improvements of community infrastructure such as streets, parks, schools, and shared spaces.

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**Healthy Food &  
Beverages  
Healthy People in  
Healthy Places**

Increase access to nutritious, local food and beverages, including human milk.

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## Strategies

Four key strategies emerged aligning with the fourth goal of promoting **operational excellence** of the initiative. These strategies will guide how the COI will approach its collective work over the next five years, and build upon strategies outlined in the 2020 COI Retreat.

### **Ensure Inclusion and Access**

Identify and address barriers to ensure equitable opportunities for all to engage in physical activity, healthy eating, and healthy places.

### **Support Community-Driven Leadership in Design and Delivery**

Deepen collaboration with the Community Council to ensure COI activities and projects are community-informed, community-led, and responsive to local priorities and lived experience.

### **Advance a Holistic Approach**

Promote coordinated strategies that recognize and address interconnectedness of physical activity, nutrition, mental health, adverse childhood experiences, positive childhood experiences, sleep, screen time, and broader social determinants of health.

### **Strengthen Multi-Sector Partnerships for Coordinated Action**

Strengthen collaboration across working groups, engage new partners, and align collective efforts to amplify policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes that foster resilient, healthy communities.

# Workplan Priorities

The COI Community Council and workgroups will carry out SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Related, and Time-bound) goals via their workplans that align with the five-year priorities and strategies. Below are the emerging projects for each.

## COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- By June 2026, engage COI partners, parents, teachers, and community members to contact state legislators in support of updated California K–12 Physical Education standards.
- By June 2026, identify three parks across San Diego County that need updating and conduct park audits to advocate for improvements to increase opportunities for safe physical activity.
- By December 2025, advocate for funding and establish partnerships to sustain the Mas Fresco Plus Program beyond June 2025.



## BUSINESS DOMAIN

- By December 2025, develop and launch a Breastfeeding-Friendly Recognition Program for worksites.
- By December 2025, add UC Health Milk Bank resources to every County of San Diego lactation room (70).



## COMMUNITY DOMAIN

- By August 2025, the Community Domain will recruit, convene, and support a Mini-Grant Selection Committee composed of at least five COI partners to review, score, and select awardees.
- By September 2025, advance SUN Bucks advocacy by presenting program updates at three COI meetings and establishing at least two “train the trainer” partnerships to support outreach.
- By December 2025, develop and implement a targeted communications and engagement plan to highlight and elevate the Community Incubator Network (KIN) program specifically supporting the community-led granting component.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD DOMAIN

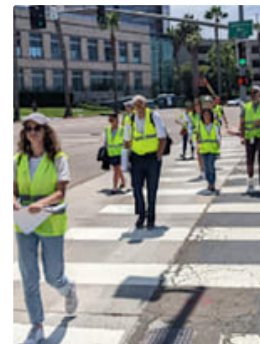
- By December 2025, relaunch the Breastfeeding-Friendly San Diego Recognition Program for childcare providers and implement an annual training on safe sleep and breastfeeding-friendly practices.
- By October 2025, launch a 5210+ awareness campaign on safe sleep and screen time impacts, including at least three outreach components (e.g., social media posts, 1-pagers, posters) to reach Head Start families and San Diego County School Districts.



# Workplan Priorities

## GOVERNMENT DOMAIN

- By June 2026, deliver at least three presentations on COI's park and walk audit work to key groups and engage at least 5 partner organizations or decision makers to participate in or support the audits.
- By June 2026, engage the County of San Diego in incorporating community-led walk and park audit findings into the Local Road Safety Plan.



## HEALTHCARE DOMAIN

- By November 2026, partner with at least 10 primary care providers to implement a referral system for the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation free swim competency lessons, and connect with at least one Federally Qualified Health Center with the goal of referring families who do not regularly access city aquatics centers.
- By December 2027, collaborate with other COI domains to improve one park in San Diego County to be more accessible, safe, and welcoming.



## MEDIA DOMAIN

- By December 2025, update the COI Media & Communications Plan to include promoting the work of all COI workgroups.
- By December 2026, plan and execute a 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary promotion and event for COI to highlight COI partners and accomplishments.



## SCHOOLS & AFTER-SCHOOL DOMAIN

- By October 2025, launch a 5210+ awareness campaign on safe sleep and screen time impacts, including at least three outreach components (e.g., social media posts, 1-pagers, posters) to reach Head Start families and San Diego County School Districts.
- By December 2026, improve routes between three K-12 schools and parks.
- By December 2026, identify and engage at least one legislative champion in San Diego County to support the alignment of California K-12 Physical Education standards with national standards.



# Workplan Priorities

Cross-collaborations build synergies across workgroups with Community Council priorities at the center. Below are some of the emerging cross-collaborations.

## Safe Routes to Healthy Places

Identify parks near schools in need of improvement, conduct walk and park audits to assess safety and accessibility, and engage decision-makers to support enhancements.

- **Community Council**
- **Government Domain**
- **Healthcare Domain**
- **Schools & After-School Domain**

## California Physical Education Standards

Advocate for updates to the California K-12 Physical Education Standards in alignment with the national standards to increase opportunities for physical activity in schools.

- **Community Council**
- **Schools & After-School Domain**

## Breastfeeding-Friendly Recognition

Support and recognize childcare providers and worksites that implement breastfeeding-friendly policies, systems, and environmental changes.

- **Business Domain**
- **Early Childhood Domain**

## Communications Campaigns

**Media Domain** supports communications and awareness campaigns including but not limited to [SUN Bucks, 5210+](#), recognition programs, and COI's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

- **Community Council**
- **Community Domain**
- **Early Childhood Domain**
- **Schools & After-School Domain**

# COI SUCCESSIONS 2020-24

Since the 2020 Strategic Planning Retreat, COI has actively advanced key priorities identified during the retreat, resulting in several significant accomplishments.

## Integrating Trauma-Informed Approaches to Address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Childhood Obesity

In response to the 2020 priority to address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), COI integrated trauma-informed messaging and care into its obesity prevention efforts. Highlights included [workshops for healthcare providers and COI partners](#), collaborations with Leah's Pantry and YMCA's Partners in Prevention, and [a HOPE-focused all-partner convening](#). COI also supported a \$3 million grant, [HEALTHY 4 YOU](#), to implement ACEs-responsive strategies to address childhood obesity in a community health center setting.

## Funding Impact

Since 2020, COI has leveraged over \$32 million to support both the initiative and its partner organizations in advancing community-driven solutions to childhood obesity. This funding has expanded access to nutrition incentive programs, improved health literacy, addressed adverse childhood experiences, established a Community Council, increased the reach of COI mini-grants, and promoted food justice through a recent community-led granting program.

## Elevating Community Voice and Leadership: Community Council

As a direct outcome of the 2020 COI Strategic Planning Retreat recommendation to *change the culture and ways of working to include more community voice and authority*, the Community Council (CC) was established. Co-designed by the Community Domain in partnership with Global ARC, the YMCA of San Diego County, and local community leaders, **the CC launched in 2022** as a diverse and representative body of community leaders from across San Diego County.

In 2023, COI updated its organizational structure to place the Community Council at the center of its work. Today, the CC holds representation across all COI working groups, including the seven domains, the Leadership Council, and the Executive Leadership Team, solidifying its role in guiding the organization's priorities and strategies. CC-identified priorities guided the discussion and outcomes from the 2025 Retreat.



# COI Successes 2020-2024

## Strategic Response to Childhood Obesity During COVID-19

Since the 2020 strategic retreat, held just before the COVID-19 pandemic, UC San Diego, Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute (ACTRI) Center for Community Health (CCH) has led the COI in adapting to rapidly emerging community needs. In response to the pandemic's impact on childhood obesity risk factors, such as reduced healthcare access, limited physical activity, heightened trauma, and food insecurity, [COI partnered with the San Diego Hunger Coalition to promote awareness and access to the new Pandemic EBT \(P-EBT\) program](#). This effort brought together local ethnic community-based organizations, community members, and COI partners to ensure equitable access to CalFresh P-EBT benefits for families, especially those impacted by school closures. This effort reflects several 2020 retreat outcomes, including improved cross-sector communication, integration of health equity, and the ability to respond to emerging threats like COVID-19.

## Advancing Street Safety for Active Living

In 2024, COI partners conducted 13 walk audits in alignment with SANDAG's Safety Focus Network, targeting areas most in need of street safety improvements around schools. The resulting [2024 Community Walk Audit Report](#) has had wide-reaching impact. It informed SANDAG's Vision Zero Action Plan, served as a model by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, and supported community-led infrastructure improvements in Chula Vista and Julian. COI was also nominated for a Circulate San Diego Momentum Award for these efforts.

In September 2024, COI convened 90 partners and decision makers at a [Legislative Breakfast](#) during Childhood Obesity Awareness Month to advance solutions for safer streets. This work advances COI's goal of increasing access to safe physical activity.



**Former Chairwoman Nora Vargas delivered an inspiring keynote address, emphasizing the importance of improving access to fresh fruits and vegetables in San Diego County and creating safe routes to schools, especially in underserved communities.**

# Looking Ahead

COI is committed to continuing its work with intention, transparency, and community leadership. Key next steps include:

- **Advancing strategic priorities** through the collaborative efforts of COI workgroups, guided by Community Council priorities.
- **Developing clear workplans** within each workgroup, including aligning performance indicators to measure progress and impact.
- **Grounding efforts in evidence-based practices** to ensure effectiveness, sustainability, and alignment with proven approaches.
- **Conducting regular check-ins** with Domain workgroups, Leadership Council, and Community Council to stay aligned on our shared priorities, track progress, and adapt as needed.
- **Collaborating with the County evaluation team** to adopt a shared measurement framework that captures the collective impact of the initiative.
- **Hosting a strategic retreat in Year 3** to reflect on progress, realign strategies if needed, and determine whether updates to the five-year strategic plan are necessary.

Through this community-driven, data-informed approach, COI will continue building toward equity, accountability, and lasting policy, systems, and environmental change to reduce and prevent childhood obesity in San Diego County.

The COI will use the community-centered priorities and strategies to guide the work of the initiative over the next five years.



# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for helping to develop the 2025-30 Childhood Obesity Initiative (COI) Strategic Plan:

- COI partners including the Community Council, Leadership Council, Executive Leadership Team, Domain co-chairs, and Domain workgroups
- Strategic planning consultant, Iliana Soto from Community Institute for Change
- COI backbone team at UC San Diego, ACTRI, Center for Community Health

**We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to the COI.**

## Connect

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