



### Delivering the National DPP Lifestyle Change Program

Organizations across the United States are working to deliver CDC's [National Diabetes Prevention Program](#) (National DPP) lifestyle change program to help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. Participants learn to make healthy food choices, be more physically active, and find ways to cope with problems and stress.

This tip sheet provides lessons learned and insights from organizations that used program supports (sometimes called incentives) to retain participants in their lifestyle change programs. Program supports are items, services, and activities that:

- ▶ Reinforce information in the curriculum. Examples include measuring cups and cooking demonstrations.
- ▶ Remove barriers to participation. Examples include transportation vouchers, weight scales, mobile devices, and prepaid phone minutes or data.
- ▶ Address [social determinants of health](#). Examples include access to healthy foods and referrals to community resources.
- ▶ Promote social support and connectedness. Examples include one-on-one meetings with the Lifestyle Coach and social media groups.

### Keys to Success: What Organizations Have Learned

- ▶ Work with participants to understand their needs, challenges, and interests and use this information to guide the planning and use of program supports.
- ▶ Plan how program supports will be selected, used, and evaluated to ensure success.
- ▶ Reach out to partners for support, resources, and information.
- ▶ Make sure program supports are culturally relevant to your participants.

These tips are explained in more detail in the following section.  
Review to see which ones will work for your program.



**Work with participants to understand their needs, challenges, and interests and use this information to guide the planning and use of program supports.**

- Understand the community's needs and challenges and take those into consideration when planning your program supports. For example, create a community asset map to identify the needs and resources in your community, such as grocery stores, affordable housing, and public transportation.

*“Knowing your audience or knowing the community you’re trying to reach is really important. You understand what their drivers are, what their pain points are.”*

—Program staff

*“Sometimes in rural areas, access to resources or services is a challenge. So, when we think about food insecurity or even access to gyms or other things like that, what’s available is really limited.”*

—Program staff

- Ask participants what their needs and interests are. Use this information to help you make decisions about what program supports to use.

*“We did a survey with the families trying to identify how we could continue supporting them.”*

—Program staff

*“We learned that the participants are really interested in physical activity, more so than just doing a walking group together. So we’ve added a component on exercise science and selected program supports specific to physical activity.”*

—Program staff

- Listen to participants when they share information on the types of program supports that would be useful to them.

*“For a program to be effective, you have to constantly listen to what your participants are telling you. If you’re paying attention to them, you’re able to respond and tailor program supports.”*

—Program staff

*“We adjusted some incentives based on participants’ feedback. We used to give out a food scale, and participants said, ‘We don’t measure our food, so that doesn’t do me any good.’ So now we give food portion plates, which is more in line with something they can relate to.”*

—Program staff

**Plan how program supports will be selected, used, and evaluated to ensure success.**

- Use a strategic planning process from the beginning to identify possible barriers to participation and possible program supports to address those barriers.

*“Each year, we complete a retention schedule and planning guide. We identify the population we’re trying to serve, barriers they might face, and retention tactics [to use] before, during, and after the cohort begins.”*

—Program staff

- Plan how you will use program supports and who will get them. For example, you can give supports to everyone or just to participants who need them. Or you can give them when participants reach a milestone, like losing a certain amount of weight or attending a certain number of sessions.

*“If you plan on using incentives, just make sure you have a plan for how and when you’re going to distribute them.”*

—Program staff

- Collect data to identify which program supports work with participants and which ones do not. You can use continuous quality improvement practices like Plan-Do-Study-Act to identify areas for improvement and strategically plan and make changes.

*“Organizations can really take advantage of Plan-Do-Study-Act. It’s such a helpful tool to refine the program.”*

—Program staff

*“We look at enrollment and retention with affiliate sites. If they’re going below a certain marker, we strategize some ideas for that.”*

—Program staff

**Reach out to partners for support, resources, and information.**

- Use best practices for building and sustaining relationships with partners who can provide resources for program supports.

*“What we really tried to do was focus on building a foundation for how to engage partners in our community that we could reach out to to support our programs.”*

—Program staff

- Identify other programs or departments within your organization that can help provide program supports for your participants.

*"Our organization has a lot of different programs. We have our counseling service, and we have our own garden, so we link all those programs together to support each other."*

—Program staff

- Identify partners who believe in your mission and want to help the community they belong to.

*"The owners of the local market are part of our organization, and they know how important this program is to the community. They want to support something that is good and beneficial to our people."*

—Program staff

- Learn from the experience of other programs. Ask them which types of program supports helped keep participants engaged and which ones did not. For example, some programs found that a supportive relationship between the Lifestyle Coach and participants was more effective than material incentives.

*"The personal support you offer somebody goes further than a cookbook. Reach out to somebody who missed class who hasn't really missed a class yet and make sure they're okay."*

—Program staff

*"I think there are some incentives that are not material incentives. One of the things that happens is that the connection between the Lifestyle Coach and the participant is an incentive itself."*

—Program staff

- Ask subject matter experts in organizations that work with your populations of focus to recommend program supports that may appeal to your participants.

*"Our subject matter expert has been working in the community for decades. She's able to run the class with the Lifestyle Coaches and show them techniques and what incentives could look like to engage their participants."*

—Program staff

## Make sure program supports are culturally relevant to your participants.

- Use program supports that align with the cultural norms, beliefs, or practices of your participants. For example, in some cultures, it is traditional to give small gifts to community members to thank them for their time and participation.

*"It's a very gift-giving culture. It's appropriate, and you should be giving gifts to people when they visit you. For them to come to us, it's a big gift for us."*

—Program staff



## Examples of Program Supports by Type



### Reinforce the Curriculum

- Measuring cups
- Water bottles
- Cooking demonstrations and recipes
- Group wellness activities (such as dance aerobics or group hikes)



### Address Social Determinants of Health

- Fruit and vegetable boxes or vouchers
- Grocery store gift cards
- Utility assistance
- Referrals to needed supports (such as behavioral health services)



### Remove Barriers to Participation

- Internet hotspots or computer tablets
- Prepaid phone minutes or data plans
- Taxi vouchers or bus tickets
- Weight scales
- Walking shoes



### Promote Social Support and Connectedness

- Private social media groups
- Weekly check-ins from the Lifestyle Coach
- Family-friendly events

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## Helpful Resources

- [Achieving Health Equity by Addressing the Social Determinants of Health](#)
- [Using a Health Equity Lens](#)
- [Emerging Practices: Guide for Using Incentives to Enroll and Retain Participants](#)