PARKS AND PLAY SPACES

This brief introduces the *Parks and Play Spaces Value Framework* as a tool for assessing the value of parks and play spaces intervention strategies for childhood obesity prevention.

Parks and play spaces: These strategies include policy, practice, or environmental change focused on public parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities, or other public places (e.g., temporary play equipment set up in streets blocked off from traffic) to increase recreational physical activity.

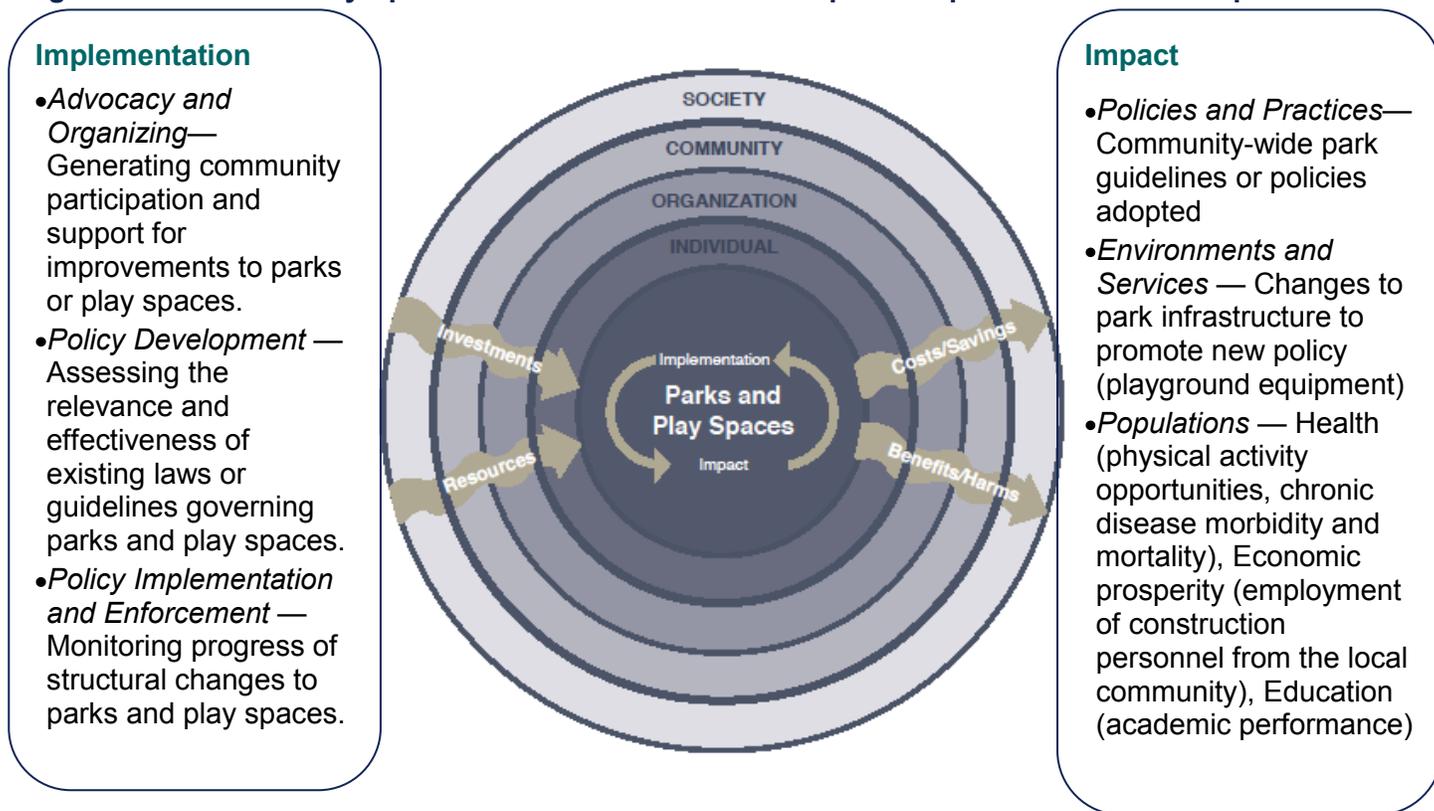## What is a value framework?

Value frameworks illustrate the complex system of implementation steps necessary to produce a range of impacts across four ecological levels of influence (individual, organizational, community, and society). These frameworks identify the investments and resources required to plan, implement, and maintain intervention strategies (inputs), as well as the associated costs, savings, benefits, or harms (outcomes).

Investments/Resources: Monetary and non-monetary inputs that support planning, implementation, or maintenance of parks and play spaces strategies.

Costs/Savings: Monetized outputs resulting from the planning, implementation, or maintenance of parks and play spaces strategies.

Benefits/Harms: Actual or potential favorable or adverse consequences that may result from implementation and maintenance of parks or play spaces strategies.

Figure 1: Parks and Play Spaces Value Framework—Example of Implementation and Impact

Implementation
- *Advocacy and Organizing—* Generating community participation and support for improvements to parks or play spaces.
- *Policy Development —* Assessing the relevance and effectiveness of existing laws or guidelines governing parks and play spaces.
- *Policy Implementation and Enforcement —* Monitoring progress of structural changes to parks and play spaces.

Impact
- *Policies and Practices—* Community-wide park guidelines or policies adopted
- *Environments and Services —* Changes to park infrastructure to promote new policy (playground equipment)
- *Populations —* Health (physical activity opportunities, chronic disease morbidity and mortality), Economic prosperity (employment of construction personnel from the local community), Education (academic performance)

How do I use the Value Frameworks in my community?

1) *Customize the value framework with information from your community*: The framework can guide comprehensive community assessments to identify indicators for measurement and analysis.

2) *Weigh investments and resources versus potential costs, savings, benefits, and harms*: The framework provides community leaders with an evidence-based approach to local decision-making.

3) *Design your parks and play spaces initiative*: The framework offers activities for advocacy and organizing; policy development, implementation, and enforcement; and build out and maintenance of environments.

4) *Evaluate the effectiveness of your initiative*: The framework points to a range of evaluation outcomes to demonstrate the collective impact of your parks and play spaces initiative.
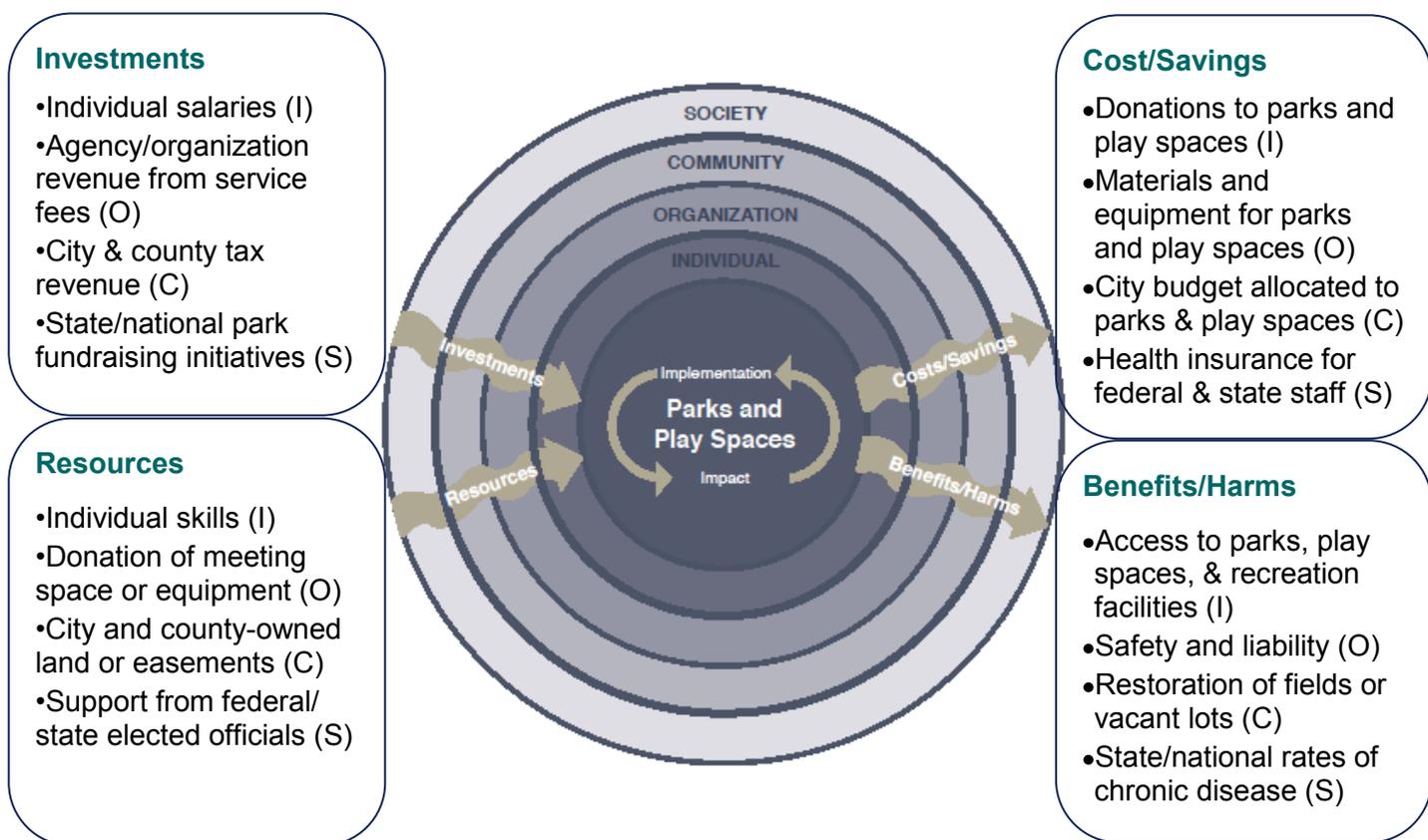
Parks and Play Spaces Policy Example

An example parks and play spaces policy is to maintain the parks and play spaces environment including repairing equipment, picking up trash, and mowing the grass. Successful planning, implementation, and maintenance of this policy requires multiple investments and resources (inputs) to minimize costs, maximize savings, increase benefits, and reduce harms (outputs).

Organizing cross-sector, multi-disciplinary partnerships with active community engagement and mobilization to conduct the planning, implementation, and maintenance activities is likely to generate buy-in and support to increase the sustainability of these efforts.

Figure 2 shows examples of these inputs and outputs at the individual (I), organizational (O), community (C), and societal (S) levels. These examples illustrate the complexity inherent in implementing parks and play spaces systems that serve multiple interests in the community as well as the political, social, environmental, economic, and health impacts.

Figure 2: Sample Parks and Play Spaces Value Framework—Inputs and Outputs

Investments

- Individual salaries (I)
- Agency/organization revenue from service fees (O)
- City & county tax revenue (C)
- State/national park fundraising initiatives (S)

Resources

- Individual skills (I)
- Donation of meeting space or equipment (O)
- City and county-owned land or easements (C)
- Support from federal/ state elected officials (S)

Cost/Savings

- Donations to parks and play spaces (I)
- Materials and equipment for parks and play spaces (O)
- City budget allocated to parks & play spaces (C)
- Health insurance for federal & state staff (S)

Benefits/Harms

- Access to parks, play spaces, & recreation facilities (I)
- Safety and liability (O)
- Restoration of fields or vacant lots (C)
- State/national rates of chronic disease (S)

The value frameworks were created as part of the *Evaluation of Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* to document and share lessons learned related to the value of childhood obesity prevention interventions implemented across 49 *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* partnerships funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

A complementary Value Framework Manual was developed to provide a detailed review of six primary strategies, including: active transportation, parks and play spaces, child care physical activity standards, child care nutrition standards, corner stores, and farmers' markets. For more information, see the manual (www.transtria.com/hkhc.php).