



## Program At-a-Glance

Intervention: Soccer for Success

Grantee: U.S. Soccer Foundation

Focus Areas: Healthy Futures; Youth Development

Focus Population: Students grades K-8

Communities Served: Underserved, urban communities nationwide

## What is the community challenge?

Between 1980 and 2008, rates of obesity among children in the United States nearly tripled. While only 6.5 percent of children ages 6 to 11 were classified as obese in 1980, this percent rose to 19.6 percent by 2008. In the past few years, the national rates of childhood obesity have stabilized. However, rates continue to rise for disadvantaged children, namely children living below 100 percent of the federal poverty level, publicly insured children, and African-

American and Hispanic children. These children may lack opportunities for physical activity in their schools and neighborhoods. Children who are overweight or obese face immediate and long-term health challenges, and are more likely to suffer physical problems such as hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes. These health challenges can affect academic performance resulting in lower educational achievement and higher high school dropout rates, and in the long run, diminish opportunities for gainful employment.

## What is the U.S. Soccer Foundation's promising solution?

*Soccer for Success* is a sports-based youth development program that serves children in grades K to 8 in underserved, urban communities. The program uses soccer as a tool to combat obesity, promote healthy eating and exercise habits, and foster positive youth development. The program consists of soccer activities that incorporate nutritional lessons for 90 minutes per day, three days a week, for 24 weeks during the school year. Adult coaches undergo extensive training to be mentors and educators for the youth.



## What did the evaluation of Soccer for Success find?

As a grantee of the Social Innovation Fund, the U.S. Soccer Foundation engaged an independent evaluator to conduct an evaluation of *Soccer for Success*. The study focused on three core health indicators for the evaluation: BMI percentile categories, waist circumference and aerobic capacity/fitness. The study found that *Soccer for Success* participants showed:

- **greater improvement towards healthy BMI and waist circumference categories** than participants in other similar programs in the same neighborhoods; and,
- **greater improvement in aerobic capacity** compared to participants in similar programs.

In addition, the study found that *Soccer for Success*:

- was **implemented as designed (i.e. with fidelity)** across the sites studied; and,
- had **statistically significant and consistent results** across different locations, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds supporting the conclusion that if the program were replicated with fidelity in other urban communities, similar results would be likely.

**To access the full evaluation report and learn more about CNCS, please visit [nationalservice.gov/research](http://nationalservice.gov/research).**



## Evaluation design, timeline and study locations

Evaluation of the *Soccer for Success* was conducted in two phases. First, an independent implementation evaluation was conducted in 2012 that focused on program operations. Next, an independent impact evaluation was conducted during 2013 and 2014 and consisted of a one year, quasi-experimental design study. Baseline data for the study was collected in early fall of 2013 and follow-up data was collected in late spring of 2014. The impact evaluation included 16 treatment sites and 14 control sites in five cities across the United States.

### Evaluation At-a-Glance

Level of Evidence before Evaluation\*: Preliminary

Level of Evidence\*\* after Evaluation: Strong

Evaluation Designs: Implementation evaluation;  
Impact evaluation (Quasi-Experimental Design)

Study Population: Children grades K-5

Evaluator(s): Child Trends (Implementation);  
Healthy Networks Design & Research (Impact)

\* SIF-supported interventions undergo a level of evidence assessment at the point of program entry and are expected to advance that base of evidence through rigorous evaluation during the grant period.

\*\*SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.



## How is the U.S. Soccer Foundation using the evaluation findings to improve?

The U.S. Soccer Foundation believes that all children, regardless of financial background, should be able to reap the health benefits from the *Soccer for Success* program. The study produced evidence that supports U.S. Soccer Foundation's aspiration of expanding the *Soccer for Success* program to reach more children. Part of the expansion will include strengthening their current partnerships and developing new ones to support the growth of *Soccer for Success* in more communities.

The content of this brief was drawn from the full evaluation report submitted to CNCS by the grantee/subgrantee. The section of the brief that discusses evaluation use includes contribution of the grantee/subgrantee. All original content from the report is attributable to its authors.

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the United States. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.