In 2009, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recognized the valuable role the YMCA could offer in implementing the New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids. Since its inception, New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids-Trenton (NJPHK-T) has focused on building, implementing and strengthening childhood obesity prevention strategies to support access to healthier foods and increase opportunities for safe physical activity for Trenton children and their families. By creating a highly engaged and diverse community partnership, NJPHK-T has intentionally sought to build long term community ownership of the results. Through shared power in communication, decision making and leadership, expectations have been set that allow for successful chronic disease prevention planning and strategy implementation.

Over 30 partners have committed to advance community-driven obesity prevention strategies that provide the children of Trenton with greater opportunities to eat nutritious foods and engage in safe physical activity in a broad, local coalition with support from national and state agencies. The coalition’s partners work with representatives from the City of Trenton and county government regularly. In the four years since the Partnership was first funded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, NJPHK-T's reach expanded to thousands of stakeholders, the partnership helped pass one of the most comprehensive Complete Streets policies in the Nation (ranked as Top 8 by Smart Growth America), established a District Wellness Committee, and built two playgrounds with funding secured by private partners and active involvement by the Board of Education. Even more notably, NJPHK-T played a crucial role in expanding breakfast by 38% and instituting a District- wide Breakfast Expansion Policy. Currently, NJPHK-T is in the process of instituting a District Wellness Policy, and developed of a collective impact initiative called the *Trenton Healthy Food Network (*THFN*)*. THFN’s strong, tight-knit churches, non-profits, health care providers, civic associations and residents constitute a reserve of social capital that can be mobilized to improve health within the city.

Interdependent leadership is a collaborative approach that focuses on shared direction, alignment, commitment and learning among diverse partners. The City of Trenton boasts several existing coalitions, including the Trenton Green Team, Trenton Health Team, New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids-Trenton, Trenton Historic Development Collaborative and Living Hope Empowerment Center, all of which are members of the Trenton Healthy Food Network- and have a strong constituency and dedication to improving health outcomes. These organizations come together as the leads for the *Growing a Healthier Trenton* coalition, which is seeking to be one of several funded collaborative initiatives in the state of New Jersey. The inclusion of the Trenton Green Team as a major partner on a health grant has been noted as innovative by the funder and may prove to be a model in the future.

Despite our successes, collaborative work can be a challenge. Research shows collaboration works best for organizations that need to solve complex problems across sectors, where a variety of ideas can help improve the outputs, and where people can co-own the solution, thus increasing buy-in. To create an authentic Culture of Health, we know multi-sector involvement is crucial. By consciously shifting to a mindset of “opening the doors” to policy and environmental changes that *require* the expertise of other organizations, our partners are provided with an entry point to become part of a project. This approach has been developed in response to challenges and learning opportunities over five years of funding. NJPHK-T has learned to find common threads that excite change-makers and open the door for them to add their unique vision for a bigger impact. We will build upon our learning to guide the other coalition leaders through the challenges of fostering a *Culture of Health.*