



**INDEPENDENT
EVALUATION OF
SOCCER FOR
SUCCESS**



Evaluation Result Snapshot



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Evaluation Overview

In 2011, the Corporation for National and Community Service awarded the U.S. Soccer Foundation a prestigious Social Innovation Fund grant to expand its *Soccer for Success* program. *Soccer for Success* is an afterschool program offered at no cost to participants, and is designed to combat children's health issues in underserved communities. As part of this grant, the Foundation was required to conduct an independent evaluation to measure the impact *Soccer for Success* had on participants. The evaluation was conducted by Healthy Networks Design & Research, an evaluation firm with vast experience in children's health programs, specifically programs designed to combat childhood obesity.

The evaluation measured 1,234 children in five cities currently operating *Soccer for Success*: Buffalo, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Seattle. In each of those cities, randomly selected schools and community centers were chosen to participate. Half of the children measured at each site participated in *Soccer for Success*, while the other half participated in other, non-athletic programs offered at the same schools or community centers where the *Soccer for Success* children were enrolled. Both groups of children were measured for **Body Mass Index (BMI)**, **aerobic capacity**, and **waist circumference** at the beginning and end of the 2013-2014 school year. A comparison between the change in each group's measurements showed the health impact that *Soccer for Success* made.

The study was recently presented at the American Heart Association's 2015 Epi-Lifestyle Conference and subsequently published in its journal, *Circulation*.



Evaluation Results

The study found that the health of *Soccer for Success* participants **improved** significantly more than children enrolled in the other evaluated programs.

- ✓ **BMI** is the most common measurement associated with monitoring the health of a child. On average, children enrolled in *Soccer for Success* **improved** their **BMI** by three percentile points more than children enrolled in other programs.
- ✓ **Aerobic capacity**, measured through the PACER Test, is an indicator of a child's endurance and heart strength. The PACER Test tracks the number of laps completed between beeps. As the test progresses, the time between beeps shortens. On average, children enrolled in *Soccer for Success* **improved** their PACER test performance by an average of 24% in comparison to children enrolled in other programs.
- ✓ **Waist circumference** is an indicator of centrally stored fat, which if too high, can lead to heart disease and type 2 diabetes. On average, children enrolled in *Soccer for Success* **improved** their **waist circumference** size by 0.22 inches, while the waist circumference for children enrolled in other programs worsened by 0.21 inches.

“The positive health impact made by Soccer for Success calls for expansion of efficacious and coordinated after-school efforts, such as this program.”

- Dr. Danielle Hollar, Lead Researcher, Health Networks Design & Research



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About the U.S. Soccer Foundation

The U.S. Soccer Foundation was established in 1994 and serves as the major charitable arm of soccer in the United States. The Foundation is a leader in sports-based youth development, using soccer as a vehicle for social change among youth in underserved communities. The Foundation has awarded over \$100 million in financial support to soccer organizations and field-building initiatives nationwide.

About Soccer for Success

Soccer for Success is the U.S. Soccer Foundation's afterschool program that uses soccer as a tool to address children's health issues and juvenile delinquency, while promoting healthy lifestyles in urban underserved communities. The Foundation partners with community-based organizations across the country to operate *Soccer for Success* sites—providing thousands of children with afterschool programming, at no cost to families, three times per week for the entire school year.

About HNDR

Healthy Networks Design & Research, Inc. assists organizations with health-related project development, implementation, evaluation, and research functions to improve the health of communities they serve. Activities led by HNDR have been funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Walmart Foundation, NRPA, and The World Bank. For more information, please visit www.healthynetworksdesignandresearch.org.

About the Social Innovation Fund

This report is based upon work supported by the Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). SIF 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 through the United States.

When *Soccer for Success* began in 2009, the program served less than 2,000 children in 3 different cities. Since the program's inception, the U.S. Soccer Foundation continues to increase enrollment and geographic reach. Currently, *Soccer for Success* operates in over 30 cities across the country:



55,000+
CHILDREN SERVED

30+
CITIES

2,500+
COACH MENTORS

\$9 M+
INVESTED



“ I’ve learned about staying healthy and making good choices. I’ve learned to change my eating habits. And, I will stay healthy as a soccer player – and have a good life!”

– **Susana**, 5th Grade