

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

**HOWDY HEALTH
TEAM-BASED
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
PROGRAMS
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE**


WALK
ACROSS TEXAS!
WITH YOUR AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



HOWDYHEALTH.TAMU.EDU

Statewide Leadership:

Michael Lopez, DrPH
Extension Program Specialist II
Family and Community Health
979-321-5017
MLLopez@ag.tamu.edu

Local Leadership:

For information or assistance with the implementation of a Howdy Health team-based physical activity program, please contact your local County Extension Office:

<https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/counties/>

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Howdy Health Team-Based Physical Activity Programs Implementation Guide

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Introduction

Chronic diseases account for 70 percent of deaths and 86 percent of U.S. health care costs. Regular physical activity and controlling weight can significantly reduce the risk and impact of chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, and depression.

Promoting programs that support walking and active living where people live, learn, work, and play has been identified as a best-practice recommendation for increasing physical activity in communities.

Howdy Health is a web-based platform that offers community-based physical activity programs to help people of all ages and abilities establish the habit of regular physical activity. Each unique program design challenges teams to track and log mileage to virtually travel across the state of Texas. Using a team-based approach, participants are further motivated by individual and team mileage goals and through friendly competition throughout the program.

Locally sponsored challenges facilitated by Extension Agents and program partners take place across the state - however, the Howdy Health team-based physical activity programs allow for year-round participation and can be started by teams at any time.

This guide and the related materials are designed to assist with the implementation of the various programs offered. You may adapt a program to fit the needs of your local community or site, however, it is important to maintain the design features that the programs are based upon. This ensures the effectiveness of physical activity behavior change supported by years of programmatic evaluations.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Michael Lopez, who provides statewide leadership of the programs or reach out to your local Extension Agent.

Thank you for your interest in the Howdy Health team-based physical activity programs!

What is Howdy Health?

Howdy Health, by [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension](#), provides a simple website and proven way to participate in physical activity and health-related programs.

Howdy Health Website

The Howdy Health website includes:

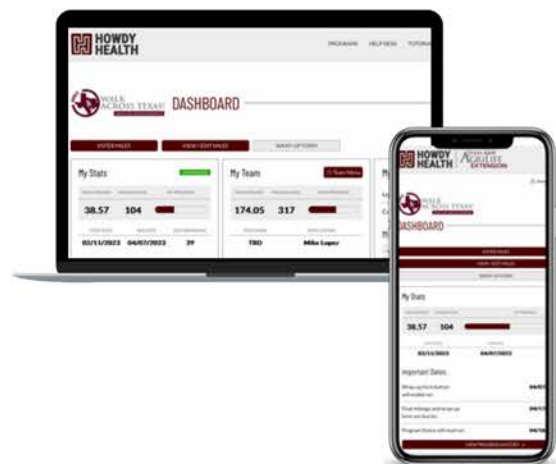
- Program information
- Research-based health articles
- Help Desk
- Ability to create an individual Howdy Health account

Features of Howdy Health accounts include:

- Program dashboards
- Program tutorials
- Individual program physical activity monitoring, tracking, and history
- Data collection and reports



**Educational Content &
Program Information**



**Program Participant
Example Interface**

Program Principles

Howdy Health team-based physical activity programs have specific principles that contribute to the effectiveness of the programs offered. The principles below should be maintained as you implement a program with your audience. You may want to share these with your volunteers or participants to reinforce their importance.

Communal

With the ability to create a team, team-based programs connect Texans through a positive journey towards a common, healthier goal.

Empowering

With numerous tools and resources available to meet the goals of being active and virtually traveling across the state, Howdy Health team-based physical activity programs motivate people to do more – for their life.

Life-changing

By completing one or multiple programs, you will feel better, lower your stress level, and get all of the additional benefits of regular physical activity, not to mention create a long-standing healthy habit.

For Everyone

All Texans are encouraged to take part in one of our programs, no matter your fitness level, everyone is welcome to participate and take the first step toward a healthier life.



Theoretical Framework - Social Cognitive Theory

The main theoretical framework used to guide the development of each Howdy Health team-based physical activity program design is the Social Cognitive Theory.

Social Cognitive Theory is one of the most widely used and published theories in public health practice for behavior change. This can be attributed to the inclusion of individual, social, and environmental concepts. As such, this theory provides an evidence-based approach and framework to address physical inactivity in Texas.

Each concept of the Social Cognitive Theory can be applied to Howdy Health team-based physical activity program design and various program strategies:

Concept	Definition	Example Program Strategy
Reciprocal Determinism	Interaction of the person, behavior and the environment	Locally sponsored events and activities*
Behavioral Capability	Knowledge and skill to perform a behavior	Education experiences* Self-selection of physical activity**
Expectations	Outcomes of the behavior	The individual**, team*** or secondary program goals*
Self - Efficacy	Confidence in one's ability to act and overcome barriers	Tracking and monitoring of mileage** Self-selection of physical activity**
Observational Learning	Occurs by watching the actions and outcomes of others' behavior	Team-based program design*** and program activities*
Reinforcements	Responses to a person's behavior that increases or decreases the likelihood of reoccurrence	Self-initiated rewards** and incentives*

*Program Implementer led; **Participant led; ***Program Design
US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018

Steps for Program Excellence

- 01 REVIEW THE HOWDY HEALTH WEBSITE FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION

- 02 DECIDE YOUR PROGRAM LEADERSHIP ROLE AND INTENSITY LEVEL

- 03 DETERMINE THE PROGRAM BASED ON INTENDED AUDIENCE

- 04 REQUEST OR REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE AND BEST-PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SELECTED PROGRAM

- 05 OFFER TRAININGS AND SHARE PROGRAM MATERIALS / RESOURCES

- 06 SET PROGRAM DATES

- 07 PLAN PROGRAM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- 08 IDENTIFY MOTIVATION ITEMS

Steps for Program Excellence

- 09 PROMOTE AND RECRUIT PROGRAM

- 10 ASSIST WITH ACCOUNT CREATION AND REGISTRATION

- 11 MAINTAIN REGULAR DIRECT CONTACT WITH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- 12 TRACK PROGRAM PARTICIPATION ONLINE

- 13 HOST PROGRAM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- 14 ENCOURAGE PROGRAM CLOSE OUT

- 15 PROVIDE RECOGNITION FOR VARIOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 16 SUBMIT NECESSARY LOCAL REPORTS OR UPDATES

Leadership Role and Intensity Level

Leadership Role:

Community-Wide: provide leadership or support a community task force with members from targeted groups, such as schools, worksites, churches, etc.

Site Specific: provide leadership or support for the implementation of a program in a specific location or audience.

Leadership Intensity: Leaders who would like to implement one of the Howdy Health team-based physical activity programs are encouraged to be **active** at the level of involvement with just the right amount of **intensity** for their unique situation.

Leadership Involvement Activity Levels:

<p>LIGHT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SHARE HOWDY HEALTH WEBSITE OR PROGRAM INFORMATION WITH LOCAL NETWORKS• DIRECT LOCAL QUESTIONS TO HOWDY HEALTH HELP DESK
<p>MODERATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ENGAGE LEADERS AT SITE OR INTENDED AUDIENCES TO FACILITATE PROGRAM• SHARE PROGRAM AND RECRUITMENT MATERIALS WITH IDENTIFIED LEADERS• PROVIDE OCCASIONAL CONTACT WITH IDENTIFIED LEADERS AND SHARE ADDITIONAL PROGRAM INFORMATION• PROVIDE OCCASIONAL CONTACT WITH PARTICIPANTS AND SHARE TAILORED INFORMATION ABOUT ANY UPCOMING LOCAL ACTIVITY OR EVENT• RESPOND TO LOCAL QUESTIONS OR DIRECT TO HOWDY HEALTH HELP DESK
<p>VIGOROUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• COMPLETE PROGRAM PREPARATION TASKS - PLAN EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, MOTIVATION, COMMUNICATION, ETC.• COORDINATE THE PROGRAM WITH FEATURES UNIQUE TO YOUR AUDIENCE• SHARE PROGRAM AND RECRUITMENT MATERIALS WITH LOCAL NETWORKS• RESPOND TO LOCAL QUESTIONS OR DIRECT TO HOWDY HEALTH HELP DESK

You do not need to select your level of involvement now. That may change. However, please remember that *light*, *moderate*, and *vigorous* activities all contribute toward our goal of a more active Texas!

So, the question now is...how **active** will you be?

Walk Across Texas Program Design

Program purpose: establish and maintain the habit of regular physical activity in adult audiences

Primary goal: as a team, log mileage to virtually travel across Texas = 832 miles

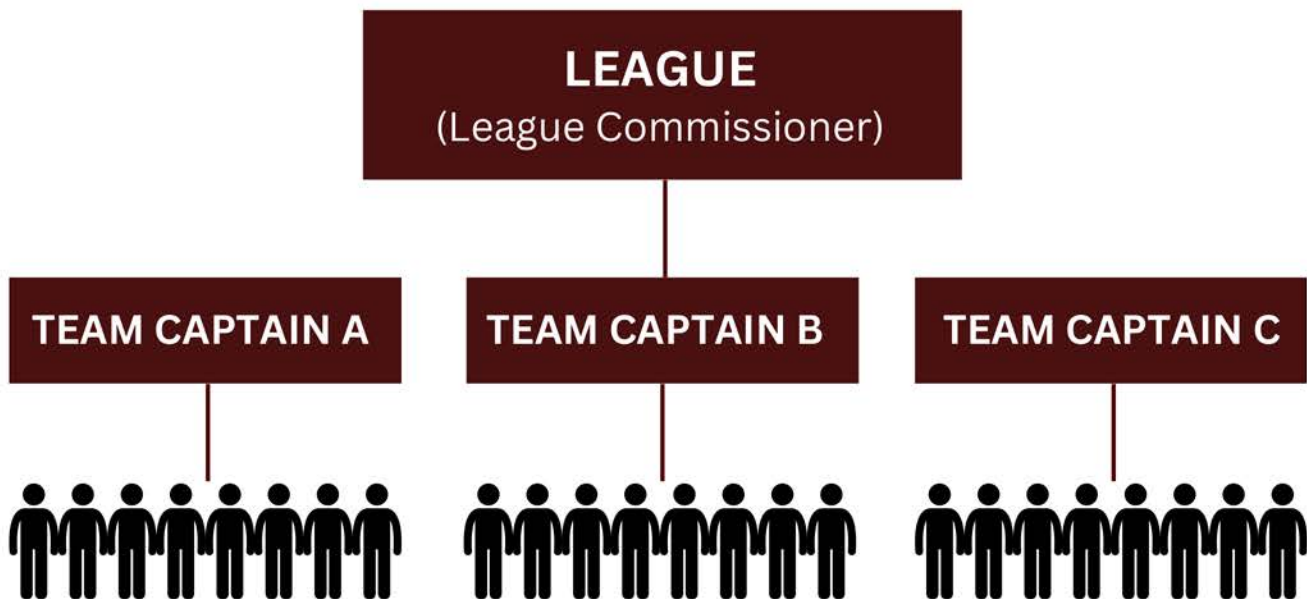
Program duration: eight - week program

Physical activity entered: daily individual mileage (56 entries)

Evaluation: Pre-Program Assessment and Post-Program Assessment (due within 10 days of program end date)

Target Audience: Adult audience, each team member must register and join team

Team Size: Each team may have up to 8 team members



Walk Across Texas Youth Program Design

Program purpose: encourage and help Texans of all ages adopt a physical active lifestyle

Primary goal: as a team, log mileage to virtually travel across Texas = 832 miles

Program duration: eight - week program

Physical activity entered: team mileage entered weekly (8 entries)

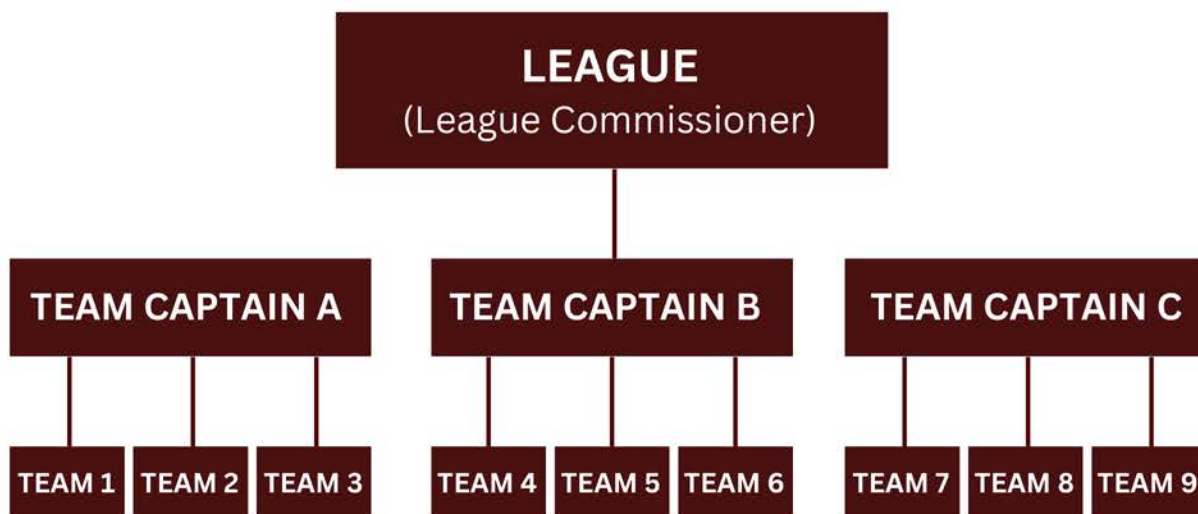
Evaluation: Team Registration Form

Target audience: Youth, but option for teams of Adults & Youth and Adults only.

Teams with adult participants follow the program design and evaluation of the Walk Across Texas Youth program

Team size: Unlimited number of participants per team

Requirement: Must have an Adult create a Howdy Health account to access Walk Across Texas Youth dashboard



Walk Through Texas History Program Design

Program purpose: promote physical activity through an educational, fun, and challenging way

Primary goal: work as a team to log steps and virtually travel Texas historical routes

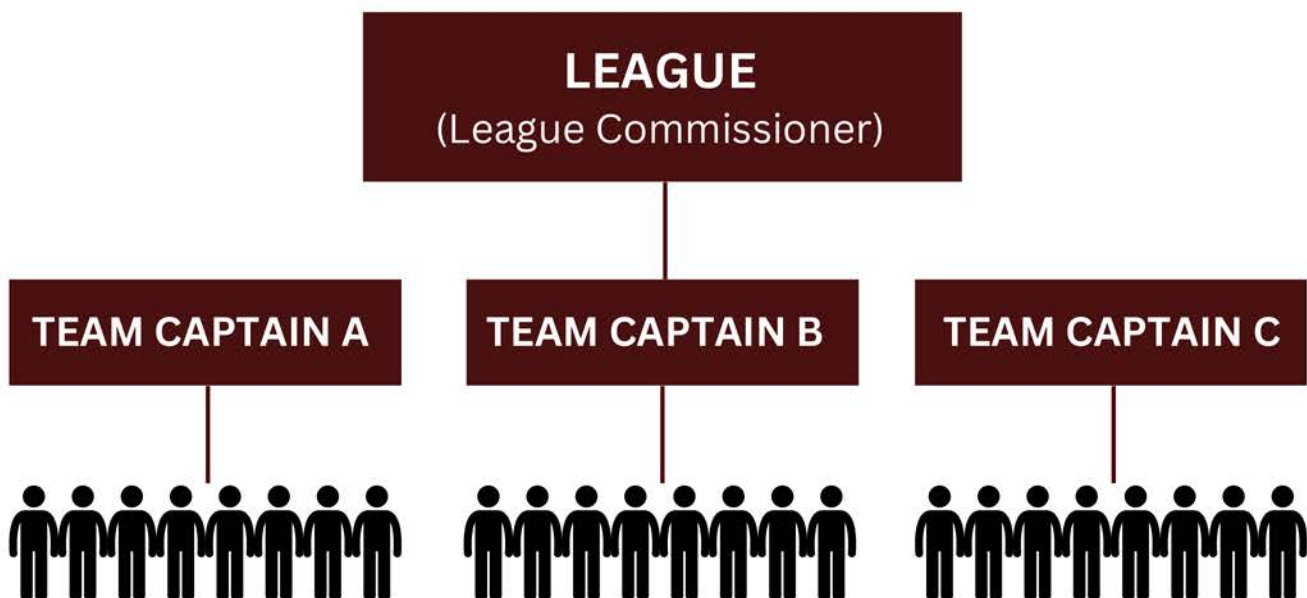
Program duration: four - week program

Physical activity entered: daily individual steps (28 entries)

Evaluation: Pre-Program Assessment and Post-Program Assessment (due within 10 days of program end date)

Target audience: Adult audience, each team member must register and join team

Team size: Each team may have up to 8 team members



Participant Roles and Expectations

League Commissioner: a league commissioner coordinates the program and oversees the teams that participate. A league commissioner sets up the league and customizes it. Also, league commissioners have greater access to participant reports.

League Commissioner Program Responsibilities

Before the program

- Create or log into your Howdy Health account
- Determine program start date
- Complete the create a league form
- Plan the program with activities and events to engage program participants
- Share program and recruitment materials with potential participants
- Invite and provide each team captain the 'League Code'
- Host a team registration event or interactive booth to promote and recruit team captains
- Determine the level of communication with program participants

During the program

- Be a role model for team captains and team members
- Maintain regular direct contact with team captains to encourage program participation with their respective team members
- Maintain regular direct contact with team members to promote program data entry, events, activities, etc.
- Request team and team member success stories
- Ask team captains to remind team members to complete their wrap-up forms once the program is complete

After the program

- Remind team captains about the completion of the team member wrap-up forms
- Highlight league successes
- Congratulate and provide recognition to team captains and team members for their successful completion of the program

Participant Roles and Expectations

Team Captain: a team captain coordinates the team within the program and their respective team members.

Team Captain Program Responsibilities

Before the program

- Create or log into your Howdy Health account
- Complete the create a team form and tie the team to a league, if applicable
- Share program and recruitment materials with team members and other potential team captains
- Provide each team member the 'Team Code'
- Inform the team members about any program activities and events
- Lead additional team specific activities or events
- Determine the level of communication with team members

During the program

- Be a role model for team members
- Communicate with team members, for example start a group chat or social media group
- Remind and encourage team members to enter program data and participate in any offered activities or events
- Request team member success stories
- Ask team members to complete their wrap-up form once the program is over

After the program

- Remind team members to complete their wrap-up form
- Highlight team successes
- Congratulate team members for their successful completion of the program

Participant Roles and Expectations

Team Member: a team member joins a team* and participates in the program

Team Member Program Responsibilities

Before the program

- Create or log into your Howdy Health account*
- Complete the join a team form using a 'Team Code'*
- Assist the team captain with recruitment of additional team members

During the program

- Have fun!
- Be a role model for other team members
- Communicate with team members
- Enter program data* and participate in any offered activities or events
- Send personal success stories

After the program

- Complete team member wrap-up form*
- Send personal success stories

*Specific only to the Adult team-based physical activity programs



Program Events and Activities

Example Events:

- Kick-Off: can be on the start date or scheduled before if there is opportunity for media coverage to encourage more people to register
- Mid-Way: mid-program is an ideal time to motivate and re-energize participants
- Celebration: participants have 10 days after the end date to submit final mileage, so if you are offering awards based on mileage, you should wait to host the event until all mileage and wrap-up forms have been submitted.

Other events might include virtual, walking groups, activity or workout session, educational demonstration, etc.

Example Activities:

Physical Activity demonstrations:

Warm-up stretches

Walk

Any activity equivalent – yoga, chair exercises, etc.

Educational presentations:

Physical activity basics

Pedestrian safety for walkers and runners

Bicycle safety for those riding outside

How to choose the right shoes or clothes

Adequate hydration and sun safety

Any other health related topic



Program specific:

What is Walk Across Texas / Walk Through Texas History?

How to track and monitor mileage

Locally sponsored program events and activities – newsletters, communication, themes, t-shirts, challenges / incentives, prizes, and awards, etc.

Door prizes and incentives

Exhibits or vendors

Program Events and Activities

Best – Practices:

Select a special starting place or location for the event, like a local mall or business, famous bridge, a community center, park, worksite, school, or courthouse – you need a place that is easy to get to for most people and a place where a lot of people would be anyway, like a mall on Saturday.

Select a location that will allow people to walk; the mileage walked for the event can be added to their mileage total.

Decide on the date and time that works best for your participants.

Decide who will make contact to secure the location.

Confirm whether you will need insurance, sanitation stations, portable toilets, permits or police escorts, if a street or highway is involved.

Identify specifically who will assist with the event.

Plan for weather (hot, cold, rain, etc.) and an alternative location, activity, or date(s).

Conduct a walk through either the day before or morning to discuss final event logistics and plans.

Plan to have a ‘information station’ where people can register (Kick-Off) or obtain program information.

Have someone identified to take pictures and plan for virtual attendance, if needed.

Program Events and Activities

Program Events and Activities Checklist:

REGISTRATION	<input type="checkbox"/> Clip boards with sign-in sheets <input type="checkbox"/> Pencils, pens	<input type="checkbox"/> Laptops or tablets for Howdy Health account creation or management
PRESENTATION	<input type="checkbox"/> A/V system <input type="checkbox"/> Extension cords	<input type="checkbox"/> Laptop or tablet
HOSTING	<input type="checkbox"/> Money box, if needed <input type="checkbox"/> Change, if needed <input type="checkbox"/> Point of Sale product i.e., Square <input type="checkbox"/> Name tags – task force/committee and dignitaries <input type="checkbox"/> Tables and tablecloths	<input type="checkbox"/> Bottled water <input type="checkbox"/> Snacks <input type="checkbox"/> Camera <input type="checkbox"/> Internet connection or mobile hotspot, if available <input type="checkbox"/> Event materials – pull-up banners, signage, etc.
PROGRAM MATERIALS	<input type="checkbox"/> Proclamation, draft available <input type="checkbox"/> Script, draft available <input type="checkbox"/> Tickets and bowl for door prizes, if offered	<input type="checkbox"/> T-shirts, if purchased <input type="checkbox"/> Prizes, awards, and incentives

Program Events and Activities

Sample Event Agenda – Kick-Off Example

30 – 60 Minutes Prior to Start of the Event:

- Ensure that any A/V equipment is working and have fun music to play prior to and during the warmup, walking, cool down, etc. If you request a local fitness expert to support this event, they usually are willing to do this and bring their own music, materials, etc.
- Welcome task force / committee, dignitaries, volunteers, and participants.
- Designate and clearly label in advance where/what the walking path will be, if applicable.
- If vendors/booths are being offered, ensure they are set up and ready.
- If any refreshments are being offered, ensure they are set up and ready.
- Have registration tables available for people to sign in at event and receive “door prize” tickets if any items are being awarded throughout the event.

Start the Event:

Welcome

If you have any officials or special guests, they can make opening comments and welcome all participants. Local County Agents can also participate in the welcome. Acknowledge any committee/task force members and their organizations as well as any sponsors/donors. Thank everyone for attending the event.

Program Information - What Is Walk Across Texas or Walk Through Texas History?

Describe the selected program and explain the supported methods for tracking and monitoring physical activity for the program. For example, we recognize three main sources of ‘mileage walked’:

1. A measured distance on a track, walking path, trail, treadmill, etc.
2. 2,250 steps measured on a pedometer / activity tracker = 1 mile walked
3. Activity Equivalent chart

Program Events and Activities

Start the Event, continued:

Registration

Explain that all registration will be done through the Howdy Health website at <https://howdyhealth.tamu.edu>

It is also recommended that you provide an opportunity for participants at the event to register. If possible, have tablets available to set up accounts and teams or to answer questions about the program. Also, share with all participants when the last day to enter mileage and wrap up forms – 10 days after the program end date.

Prizes, Awards & Incentives

Explain any categories of prizes, awards, or other incentives that will be given during or at the end of the program. Leaders should decide in advance what types of prizes, awards, or incentives will be provided.

Below are just a few examples, but be creative:

- Registration
- Enter 50,000 steps or 7.5 miles per week
- Enter 4 or more days per week
- Best week yet! – step or mileage increase
- Participant feedback – quotes, inspirational team member, etc.
- Wrap-Up Submission
- Individual or Team Mileage Totals
- Most Creative Team Name



First Mile Walk

Explain to participants that to get everyone started on their program goals, everyone is going to walk their first mile together! If possible, try to have a local fitness or kinesiology expert/volunteer available to lead the group in a brief warm-up. We encourage having fun music.

Program Events and Activities

First Mile Walk, continued

Everyone then takes off to complete the first mile walk together. Upon returning from walk, have fitness expert/volunteer lead everyone in a cool down. Be sure to have water available in case people need to hydrate and have stops available on the route. You may need to have signage or people to help direct participants. For larger groups, we recommend having someone lead and be the ‘caboose’.

Highlight Future Events, Activities, and Programs

If planning any additional events, activities, and programs be sure to share with participants so they can put them on their calendars.

Door Prizes

Again, thank any sponsors for any prizes, incentives, or refreshments you may have available. Draw any tickets if you have door prizes available.

Closing

Remind attendees that if they would like help with registration or program information, they can find a task force member or local County Agent after the event. Thank everyone for coming out and participating- wish everyone the best of luck!

After the Event:

- Ensure all A/V equipment is returned.
- Ensure all booths/tables are cleared out.
- Pick up any signs/flags etc. used to mark up the designated first mile walking path, if needed.
- Send thank you notes to all committee/task force members and any sponsors/donors to the event.
- Continue meeting regularly with committee/task force.
- Send regular communication to participants.

Motivation - Prizes, Incentives, and Awards

Best – Practices:

- Decide on the number and type of prizes, incentives, and awards during the planning process.
- Solicit motivational items from local businesses – volunteers can help.
- Remember, larger organizations or corporations might take longer to approve, so consider submitting these requests early in the planning process.
- Motivational items do not need to be expensive, determine something that people really want.
- Motivational items are more effective if participants know what motivational items will be offered during the recruitment process and reminded of or given motivational items throughout the program.
- Offer motivational items in various ways so that anyone can win, especially those in our intended audience.
- Raffles are a great way to give everyone an equal chance.

Example Types of Motivational Items:

No- / Low-Cost Examples

- Certificates
- Highlight on digital media
- Name posted on bulletin
- Lunch with a local dignitary
- Manager or coach for the day
- Article in local newspaper
- Dare challenges
- Leave time or extra lunch time
- Clothing or jean passes



Cost Examples

- Physical activity items: t-shirts, water bottles, cooling towels, fanny packs, hats, sweat bands, walking shoes, treadmill, etc.
- Any other item, but healthy living items are suggested
- Healthy celebration or party

Motivation - Prizes, Incentives, and Awards

Category Suggestions to Offer Motivational Items:

Howdy Health Program Design – Team

- Team registration
- Teams with more than 4 team members
- Most creative team names
- Best yet! – team step or mileage increase
- Total team mileage goal
- Team(s) reaching destinations first, second, etc.
- Team(s) with the most mileage first, second, etc.

Howdy Health Program Design – Individual

- Team member registration
- Enter 50,000 steps or 7.5 miles per week
- Enter 4 or more days per week
- Best yet! – team member step or mileage increase
- Total mileage entries submitted – at least half recommended
- Total individual mileage
- Meeting individual mileage goal
- Wrap up submission

Participant Engagement

- Participant feedback – submission for newsletters, photo, quotes, inspirational team member, brag about a team member, etc.
- Bingo card or scavenger hunt
- Attend an educational session or other Extension event (like kick off) or activity (like weekly walk)

Promote Program

1 Month Before Start Date:

Promote Program Information

- Identify and list groups or organizations that might be interested in the program*
- Develop strategies to contact or share program information with each of these potential participant sites*.
- Solicit motivation items – prizes, incentives, and awards.
- Create or help establish league(s) for the selected program.
- Develop and provide necessary marketing materials. Important information to include:
 - Program
 - Program talking points
 - Highlight program features – events, activities, prizes, incentives, and awards
 - Recognize partnerships or sponsors
 - Previous participant comments
 - Program website link
- Highlight program or ‘save the date’ information. Example audiences include:
 - Past program participants
 - Social media pages
 - Committees
 - Email list
 - Paper
 - News stations or media
 - Official letter
 - In-person visit
 - Bulletin board
- Create recruitment materials



*Community-Wide programs only

Promote Program

2 Weeks Before Start Date:

Promote Recruitment Information

Approximately 50% of program registrations happen in the two weeks leading to the program start date.

Provide everyone who is helping with recruitment the necessary program recruitment materials.

Important information to include:

- Program start date
- Registration steps
- Local program registration deadline
- League information i.e., league code(s)
- Howdy Health registration / login link
- Contact information

Program Start Date:

Continue Recruitment

Approximately 40% of program registrations happened on (15%) or after the program start date.



Program Communication

Purpose:

- Provide encouragement and timely information to program participants.
- Reach participants who may not be able to attend program events or activities.
- Promote upcoming program events and activities.
- Education source.
- Opportunity to tell your story.

Best – Practices:

- Have a goal and work towards that!
- Determine the details for your communication with participants during the planning process:
 - **Who** – you, support staff, or volunteer
 - Recommendation: we often only think of program communication directly to all participants, but Team Captains and League Commissioners (if available) could benefit from tailored messages
 - **What** – see Content Suggestions below
 - **When** – daily, weekly, or other key program times
 - Recommendation: weekly – Welcome, Each Program Week, Completion
 - **Where** – print, web, email, social media, newsletter service, etc.
 - Recommendation: If email, be sure to send via blind carbon copy to protect participant privacy
- You have the flexibility with the frequency of communication based on your resource capacity...it's okay to start small and try to be consistent.
- If you are conducting a larger program, consider dividing the development and distribution of program communication.
- You may want to select a theme for each unique program or communication to keep it fresh, for example health or destination themes.
- Use program specific resources and templates.

Program Communication

Best – Practices, continued:

- Program communication can include program events and activities, like Kickoff, Mid-Way, or Celebration events.
- Include an educational component.
- Remind participants about final mileage and program wrap-up submission due dates.
- Highlight program sponsorships or donors.
- Request feedback – check in with your program audience and see what they think about your chosen communication methods or program features.
- Use analytics to measure your success and impact.

Content Suggestions:

- Your favorite resource
- Offer and check on goal(s)
- Highlight a National Day or Month event
- Recipe(s)
- Share upcoming program offerings
- Request or highlight pictures
- Request or highlight testimonials
- Promote a program challenge
- Suggest a local physical activity destination, like a local park or trail
- Reminder to input miles
- Leaderboards (top teams, most individual miles, etc.)
- Map the progress of teams or locations
- Favorite motivational quote
- Share your own physical activity journey, successes, struggles, etc.
- Physical activity in the news
- Other physical activity and healthy eating tips



Program Tracking and Close Out

Program Tracking:

The Howdy Health website tracks mileage live, across different screens based on the participant's role.

A View Progress/History screen highlights the active and previous league, team, and team member stats.

Other screens based on participant role include:

- League Commissioners: League Profile, View League Teams, View Team Members
- Team Captains: Team Profile, View Team Members, View League Teams
- Team Members: View Team Members, View League Teams

To learn more about the information contained on each of these screens, please review the Howdy Health Help Desk: <https://howdyhealth.org/programs/helpdesk>

Program Close Out:

Once the program end date is reached, all team members have **10 days** to enter final mileage and submit wrap-up forms (post-program assessment).

Once completed or 10 days have passed, the Howdy Health account is reset and will go back to registered status.

Participants are able to view previous team member, team, and league stats in the history screen under each program dashboard.

For more in-depth reports or templates to share program results and impact, please contact your local County Extension Office:

<https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/counties/>

Alternatively, you can submit a support ticket to the Howdy Health Help Desk, located here: <https://howdyhealth.org/programs/helpdesk/submit-ticket>