

# Policy, Systems, & Environmental Change Efforts

PSE interventions aim to transform communities by increasing access to healthy food and expanding opportunities for physical activity, creating conditions that enable SNAP-eligible populations to make healthy choices. In FFY 2025, LHDs partnered with **790 sites** in low-income communities across California to plan, implement, or maintain PSE activities. 702 (90%) of these sites progressed past the planning stage; a total of **3,451 PSE changes adopted** and **1,346,195 individuals reached** were reported at these sites.

The most common PSE approaches used were related to gardens, food quality, and food access.

## GARDENS

LHDs implemented **661 garden-related changes** at **283 sites**. Garden interventions were most commonly implemented at sites in the following settings:



K-12 schools  
(54% of sites)



Early childhood programs  
(33% of sites)

Key focus areas for garden interventions included:

- Initiating, improving, expanding, reinvigorating, or maintaining edible gardens
- Using the garden for nutrition education
- Providing opportunities for parents, students, or community members to work in the garden

## FOOD QUALITY

LHDs implemented **589 PSE changes** to improve food quality at **270 sites**. Food quality interventions were most commonly implemented at sites in the following settings:



K-12 schools  
(38% of sites)



Food banks & pantries  
(24% of sites)



Early childhood programs  
(15% of sites)

Key focus areas for interventions to improve food quality included:

- Providing access to free, high-quality water
- Improving quality or variety of menus or recipes
- Expanding the availability and use of salad bars

## FOOD ACCESS

LHDs implemented **329 PSE changes** related to food access at **217 sites**. Food access interventions were most commonly implemented at sites in the following settings:



Food banks & pantries  
(60% of sites)



Early childhood programs  
(12% of sites)



Health clinics & hospitals  
(8% of sites)

Key focus areas for food access related interventions included:

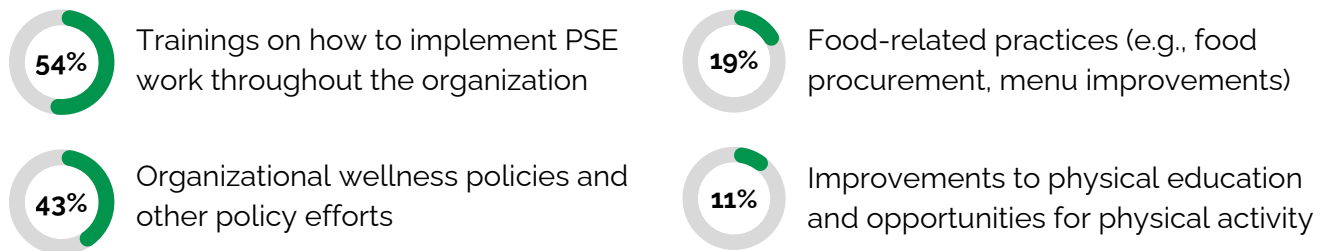
- Gleaning excess healthy foods for distribution to clients, needy individuals, or charitable organizations
- Mechanisms for distributing produce to families or communities, such as gardens or farmer's markets
- Creating new food banks, food pantries, or emergency food distribution sites

## PSE INTERVENTIONS AT ORGANIZATIONAL & COMMUNITY LEVELS

LHDs also implement organizational- and community-level PSE interventions. Organizational-level PSEs happen at a “parent” organization that provides direction for multiple sites. Community-level PSEs impact a jurisdiction or geographical area, such as a county, city, census tract, or neighborhood.

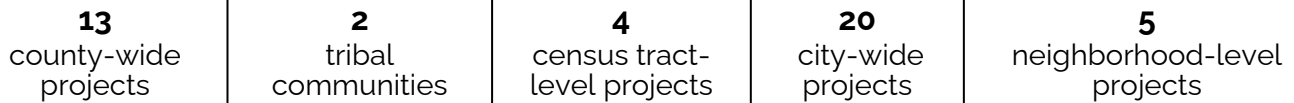
### Organizational-level PSE Interventions

Twenty-three LHDs reported a total of **54 organizational-level PSE changes**, frequently occurring at **school districts (57%)**. Organizations focused on PSE efforts related to:



### Community-level PSE Interventions

Twenty-one LHDs reported community-level PSE efforts happening in **44 communities or jurisdictions**. Community-level PSE efforts targeted:



Over one-third of community-level PSE efforts worked towards **policy change (39%)**. These efforts related to a wide range of policies, including complete streets and active transport (8 projects implemented by 6 LHDs).

LHDs continued working on complete streets and active transportation projects, teaming up with students, school boards, local government agencies, parks departments, law enforcement, and other partners to improve sidewalk conditions, crosswalk and intersection safety, and bus access. Community engagement often took the form of walk audits, where students and residents observed their surroundings, noted potential safety challenges, developed suggestions, and presented these insights to decision-makers to help shape future improvements.



In FFY25, 4 LHDs worked with researchers at Harvard on 7 'CHOICES' (Childhood Obesity Intervention Cost-Effectiveness Study) projects to model the cost-effectiveness of strategies to promote healthy weight, healthy eating, and active living.

The most common CHOICES project was to model a \$0.02/ounce sugary drink excise tax that would be levied on local bottlers, distributors and/or manufacturers. Three projects modeled a city-wide tax and 2 modeled a county-wide one.

