



Call for Applications AFHC Awards for Healthy Cities 2026

Awards for Progress of Healthy Cities

Conceptual framework

The approach of ‘Healthy City Programme’ (HCP) is based on philosophy with assumption in enhancement in health through improvements in certain social, cultural and economic conditions with changes in human attitudes; initiatives in improvement of personal and environmental health; and health being regarded as integral part of development in the community.^{1,2} The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion provided the strategic framework defining health promotion as “the process of enabling people to take control over, and to improve their health”.³ Therefore a Healthy City is not necessary the one that has achieved a particular level of health but is conscious of health and is striving to **improve** it. HCP and healthy setting literature states that when such long term development projects are evaluated during the first few years, the focus should be on process rather than outcomes because improvement in health status are only likely to change in longer term.⁴⁻⁷ A healthy city is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to support each other in performing all the functions of life and maximise their potentials as socio-ecological model of health improvement.⁸⁻¹⁰ The measurement of health status should also go beyond mortality and morbidity and address well-being and quality of life,¹¹ and also the determinants of health.¹²

Key features of a Healthy Cities should include high political commitment and mobilisation, effective and strong leadership, intersectoral collaboration and involvement of key stakeholders, community participation, increasing awareness of health issues, capacity building, integration of activities in elementary settings, development of a city health profile and a local action plan, incorporation of views from all groups within the community, mechanism for sustainability, creation of network locally and overseas, information sharing, monitoring and evaluation, and research.^{1,2,5, 10-11, 13-14}

SPIRIT Framework

Public health problems result from complex social, economic, political, biological, genetic and environmental causes.¹¹ Improvements in health literacy can help individuals tackle the determinants of health better as they build up the personal, cognitive and social skills which determine the ability of individuals to gain access to, understand and use information to promote and maintain good health.¹² Healthy setting can empower members of the setting to improve health literacy and findings from Healthy Promoting School have demonstrated this perspective.¹⁵⁻¹⁶ For improvement of population level, both macro and micro level perspectives need to be taken into account.¹⁷ **SPIRIT** framework is proposed to evaluate the city for award from Alliance for Healthy Cities. It can provide a framework in which an integrated and holistic approach to public health can be pursued so policy, environment, social matters, behaviour and biomedical interventions can take their rightful place side by side.¹⁸⁻²⁴ Paper by Lee and Nakamura can provide good reference to understand the **SPIRIT** framework and successful healthy cities.²⁵

Setting approach, **S**ustainability

Political commitment, **P**olicy, community **P**articipation

Information, **I**nnovation

Resources, **R**esearch

Infrastructure, **I**ntersectoral

Training

SPIRIT Checklist was developed to recognize progress of individual cities and a series of awards will be given to AFHC members on the basis of their applications.

Award given

AFHC members will be awarded on the basis of their applications. According to evaluation of the process and also impact, one of the following four Awards will be given:

- **Award for Healthy City with Good Infra-structure**

*The City must demonstrate the initiatives in using multiple setting to promote population health with strategic planning. Political commitment with healthy public policy and involvement of different stakeholders are important steps forward. The City needs to create her city health profile with resources earmarked to address the health needs of the city including training at different levels. The City should have the basic layout of infra-structure involving different sectors. If the City has initiated all these steps, it would be considered for “**Healthy City Award with Good Infra-structure**”.*

- **Award for Healthy City with Good Dynamic**

*For next stage of development, the City should demonstrate action in co-ordinating healthy settings to promote better health. The City needs to demonstrate how policies have been translated into practice and how the city makes use of her city health profile. The City also needs to demonstrate how local leaders and stakeholders are engaged in the infra-structure of Healthy City to promulgate the healthy city movement forward. If the City has reached that level, it would be considered for “**Healthy City Award with Good Dynamic**”.*

- **Award for Healthy City with Strong Action**

*For advanced development of Healthy City, the Health City becomes an integral part of city planning and development. Resources are allocated for research and development including networking with cities nationally and internationally taking the City into international arena. Local politicians and leaders have demonstrated as champions of Healthy City to improve the livelihood of the local residents. The city has active participation from professional groups, academic and private sectors. This can take the city to get the “**Healthy City Award with Strong Action**”.*

- **Award for Healthy City Expert**

*Healthy City continues to work for further improvement of health and quality of life of its citizens. This award is given to the cities or those leading the cities to become healthy cities, and already received “AFHC Award for Healthy City with Good Dynamic” or “AFHC Award for Healthy City with Strong Action” when they show further continuing progress with good evidence in its city and contribution to promote Healthy Cities in the region and beyond. Such city or person will get the “**Healthy City Award Expert**”.*

Eligible Applicants

Full Members of the Alliance for Healthy Cities which gained its membership status before June 2026.

Materials to be submitted [Submission should be by sending electronic files. The following guidelines must be followed strictly.]

- Submission form of Award for Progress of Healthy Cities (at the end of this file).
- Fill in the SPIRIT Template (SPIRIT template_2026.docx) STRICTLY in accordance to word limits with NO more than FIVE photos and in LESS than 100 words describing how each photo reflects success of Healthy City development. Any excess materials or excess words WILL NOT be taken into account for evaluation.
- For Award for Healthy City Expert, at least two of the following information in LESS than 500 words should be submitted in addition to fill the SPIRITS Template: (1) evidence to show the progress since their receipt of previous award; (2) evidence to show the progress of developing revised version of Healthy City Plan (including revision of city’s master plan or city’s development plan) , (3) evidence to show revised structure and infrastructure for a Healthy City to meet the city’s recent needs, (4) evidence to work on new priority issues identified by the city with exact description of the work showing how Healthy City approach and Healthy City framework in the city contributed to a good work, and (5) evidence of work to promote healthy cities in its countries, in the region, and beyond.

Assessment of different levels of Awards will be conducted by leading academics in the field as they have the expertise in assessment based on evidence provided. They will then make their reports to the Award Committee of Alliance. After further validation by the Awards Committee, the Committee will make recommendation to the Steering Committee for consideration of Award. There will be four types of Award to be given.

Deadline for submission

July 10, 2026

Contact Information

Any queries should be sent to:

Awards Committee of the Alliance for Healthy Cities

c/o Prof Keiko Nakamura

Secretariat of the Alliance for Healthy Cities

Email: alliance.ith@tmd.ac.jp

URL: <http://www.alliance-healthycities.com/>

References:

1. WHO. *Regional Guidelines for developing a Healthy Cities Project*. WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, 2000.
2. WHO. *Healthy Cities Initiatives: approaches and experiences in the African Region*. WHO Regional Office for Africa, 2002.
3. WHO. The Ottawa Charter for health promotion. *Health Promotion International* 1987;1:3–5.
4. Nutbeam D. Evaluation health promotion. *Health Promotion International* 1998; 13: 27-44.
5. Werna E, and Harpham T. *Cox's Bazar Healthy Town Programme, Bangladesh- review of progress*. Consultancy Report for WHO.
6. Lee A., Cheng F., St Leger L. Evaluating Health Promoting Schools in Hong Kong: The Development of a Framework. *Health Promotion International* 2005; 20(2): 177-186.
7. de Leeuw, E.; Green, G. The Logic of Method for Evaluating Healthy Cities. In De Leeuw, E. and Simos, J. (eds). *Healthy Cities – The Theory, Policy, and Practice of Value-Based Urban Planning*. Springer: New York, USA; 2017, pp. 463-48
8. Hancock, T.; Duhl, L.J. *Healthy Cities: Promoting Health in the Urban Context*. WHO: Copenhagen, Denmark, 1986.
9. Ashton, J.; Thurston, M.N. New Public Health. *International Encyclopedia of Public Health*. 2017, 2nd edition, 5, 231-239. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-803678-5.00458-6>
10. Hancock, T.; Labonté, R.; Edward, R. *Indicators that Count! Measuring Population Health at the Community Level*. 2000, Centre for Health Promotion/ParticipACTION: Toronto.
11. Lee A. The Healthy City Concept and Evaluation Framework. In Lee A (ed). *Healthy Setting Approach in Hong Kong: Sustainable Development in Population Health*. City University of Hong Kong Press, 2021, pp. 23-42
12. Lee A. Rights to Health Promotion: Revisiting the Healthy Setting. In Lee A (ed). *Healthy Setting Approach in Hong Kong: Sustainable Development in Population Health*. City University of Hong Kong: Hong Kong; 2021, pp. 163-178.
13. de Leeuw, E.; Kickbusch, I.; Palmer, N.; Spanswick, L. European Healthy Cities come to terms with health network governance. *Health Promotion International* 2015, 30 (Suppl 1), i32-i44.
14. O'Neill, M.; Simard, P. Choosing indicators to evaluate Healthy Cities project: a political task? *Health Promotion International* 2006, 21(2), 145-151.
15. Lee A., Wong MCS., Cheng F., Yuen HSK., Keung VMW., Mok JSY. Can the concept of Health Promoting Schools help to improve students' health knowledge and practices to combat the challenge of communicable diseases: Case study in Hong Kong? *BMC Public Health* 2008; 8:42.
16. Lee A., Lo ASC, Keung MW, Kwong CM, Wong KK (2019). Effective Health Promoting School for better health of children and adolescents: Indicators for success. *BMC Public Health*, 19:1088 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7425-6>
17. Lee A., Kiyu A., Milman HM., Jara J. Improving Health and Building Human Capital through an effective primary care system. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2007; 84(suppl): 75-85.
18. WHO. Shanghai Declaration on promoting health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (9th Global Conference on Health Promotion. WHO: Geneva, 2016. <https://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/9gchp/shanghai-declaration/en/>

19. WHO. *Healthier and happy cities for all: A transformative approach for safe, inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies*. WHO: Copenhagen: Copenhagen Consensus for Mayors, February 13, 2018.
20. Tsouros, A. City Leadership to Health and Well-being: Back to the Future. *J Urban Health*, **2013**, *90 (Suppl)*, 4-13.
21. Kang, E. Inter-sectoral Collaboration for physical activity in Korean Healthy Cities. *Health Promotion International* 2016, *31(3)*, 551-561.
22. Lee A. SPIRIT Framework and City Health Profile: Concept and Case Studies. In Lee A (ed). *Healthy Setting Approach in Hong Kong: Sustainable Development in Population Health*. City University of Hong Kong: Hong Kong, 2021, pp. 43-64.
23. Bloch, P.; Toft, U.; Reinbach, H.C; Clausen, L.T.; Mikkelsen, B.E; Poulsen, K., Jensen, B.B. Revitalizing the setting approach - supersettings for sustainable impact in community health promotion. *Int J Behav Nutr Phy Act* 2015, *11*, 18 (Sept 14), doi:10.1186/s12966-014-0118.8
24. Rydin, Y.; Bleahu, A.; Davies, M.; Dávila, J. D.; Friel, S.; De Grandis G., Groce, N.; Hallal, P. C.; Hamilton, I.; Howden-Chapman, P.; Lai, K. M.; Lim, C. J.; Martins, J.; Osrin, D.; Ridley, I.; Scott, I.; Taylor, M.; Wilkinson, P.; Wilson, J. Shaping cities for health: complexity and the planning of urban environments in the 21st century. *Lancet* 2012, *379 (9831)*, 2079–2108.
25. Lee A, Nakamura K. Engaging diverse community groups to promote population health through Healthy City approach: Analysis of successful cases in Western Pacific Region. *Journal Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021; *18*, 6617. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126617>