The Accelerating National Community Health Outcomes through Reinforcing Partnerships Program (ANCHOR) was a joint effort led by the American Heart Association with evaluation support provided by the Laboratory for Community Health Evaluation and Systems Science. Funded in 2014, the ANCHOR program was focused on building and strengthening community infrastructure to implement population-based health strategies for chronic disease prevention by targeting cardiovascular disease risk factor. From March 2015 to April 2016, the AHA worked with an initial cohort of 15 different communities across the U.S. to identify existing community partnerships, or establish new partnerships, that worked to implement policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes within chronic disease prevention interventions at the local level.

Each community took a different approach to implementing these changes; however, each partnership aimed to identify and leverage partnerships to design and implement PSE interventions addressing one or more of the following topics: 1) access to healthy foods and beverages, 2) physical inactivity, and/or 3) smoke-free environments. Over a three-year period, the Dr. Garney’s team evaluated the work of the American Heart Association, partnering with community stakeholders to carry out their work. By the end of the program, the evaluation found that the ANCHOR program addressed community identified needs, focused on community engagement and building capacity for PSE changes by engaging partnerships for implementation of changes, changed communities’ perception of the American Heart Association by focusing on community-level changes, rather than state or national policy, and reached more than 16 million people and made changes in over 300 unique settings in three years. As a result of this work, Dr. Garney led and supervised the publication of four manuscripts and an additional manuscript that is currently in press.