

Elevating Community Health through Philanthropy

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Today's healthcare providers face a pressing expectation to elevate community health status and to pivot from a care delivery model focused on sick care to one of prevention and wellness. This has intensified the focus on expanding preventive care, addressing health disparities in at-risk populations, and creating community partnerships to address a continuum of needs. Emerging efforts also embrace non-traditional hospital priorities to address social determinants of health including the availability of healthy food, housing, access to recreation, and prevention of violence. Organizations are honing in on specific groups defined by geography, ethnicity, diagnosis, or insurance status as well. While many organizations anchor their specific ambitions in data from community health assessments and organizational strengths and priorities, the greatest barrier to implementing strategies for community health improvement is not *defining* needs to address, but rather *securing* resources to address them.

Today, more than 90 percent of hospitals and health systems agree "population health" is aligned with their organizational mission; however, only 19 percent say they have the financial resources needed to pursue it.¹ While healthcare organizations anticipate downstream financial benefits from community health efforts, the fact that the current healthcare reimbursement system provides minimal financial support for community health is a significant impediment to organizations pursuing this strategy. This means governing boards must grapple with identifying sources for capital and operating dollars to develop, build, expand, refine, and sustain solutions to elevate community health status. Therefore, many organizations are moving beyond dependency on operational revenue and reserves to leverage alternative funding including healthcare philanthropy: voluntary, charitable giving by individuals, businesses, and foundations.

The rationale for harnessing community giving is simple. Healthcare philanthropy offers an exceptional return on investment,

with a median return of \$4.29 for each dollar invested in fund development activities.² Further, savvy donor-investors are drawn to projects with a clear, identifiable, and measurable social impact. Donors also respond to proactive solutions with demonstrated downstream impact: because prevention can ultimately be the most powerful form of cure.

Examples of Leveraging Philanthropy

Charitable investment for community health activities is an opportunity for all types of organizations—from community hospitals to healthcare systems to academic medical centers—with the scale and ambition tailored to the capabilities, geographic footprint, resources, and vision of the facilitating organization. For example, consider how some organizations have leveraged philanthropy to power their plans:

- Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock is a 169-bed hospital serving Keene, New Hampshire. The hospital has been recognized for its Healthy Monadnock initiative to increase access to healthy food, safe walking and biking, smoke-free workplaces and public spaces, and family resilience for 80,000 area residents. To expand efforts, the hospital launched a community-driven major gifts campaign, the Initiative for Community Wellness, which raised more than \$1.1 million. This allowed the addition of worksite wellness managers to collaborate with 80 area employers to facilitate employee access to physical activity, healthy eating, and policies that support families; two school coordinators to engage 22 schools to promote physical activity and healthy eating; and a partnership manager to facilitate alignment of more than 50 community partners. Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock's President, CEO, and Chief Medical Officer, Don Caruso, M.D., M.P.H., said, "Donor investment in our population health initiative, Healthy Monadnock, has made an important impact on our ability

Key Board Takeaways

Governing boards have an opportunity to utilize community charitable giving as a valuable element of the funding strategy to advance population health, community benefit, and community partnership initiatives. Leaders wishing to pursue this opportunity should consider the following:

- Philanthropy is a viable revenue opportunity for all types of healthcare organizations.
- Relationship-based fund development has an exceptional return on investment.
- Seek to uncover synergy between organizational vision and donor interest.
- Prepare to articulate the specific impact of proposed solutions to donors in terms of population impacted, numbers affected, outcomes, etc.
- Collaborate with the foundation board to identify initiatives with donor appeal.

to expand the initiative to reach more community members where they work, learn, live, and play. Cheshire Medical Center needed 'more boots on the ground' to further the reach of Healthy Monadnock, and our recent major gifts campaign supports this expansion."

- Dignity Health is the fifth-largest health system in the nation with 39 hospitals across California, Arizona, and Nevada. Its vision is for sweeping change to address a major public health problem: human trafficking. The health system aims to implement a Human Trafficking Response Program within every Dignity Health facility to connect victims to community resources beyond health-related needs and to share best practices with healthcare facilities across the country. This long-term and multi-million-dollar initiative will require many funding and program partners. To date, Dignity Health Foundation has raised approximately \$1.1 million to leverage the significant investment Dignity Health made to support leadership staffing and paid training time for its clinical teams. Funding has also supported workshops for providers outside Dignity Health to ensure other hospitals are prepared to assist victims. Director of the Human Trafficking Response Program and human trafficking survivor Holly Gibbs said, "Our goal is to share our best practices with other systems, so one day human trafficking response programs like ours will be a standard offering at all

1 Health Research and Educational Trust, *Approaches to Population Health in 2015: A National Survey of Hospitals*, Chicago, IL, August 2015.

2 Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, *2016 Report on Giving*, November 2016.

hospitals and healthcare facilities across the country.”

- HealthEast, a four-hospital system serving greater St. Paul, Minnesota, convened a community-based collaborative to identify opportunities to improve community health and well-being. The collaborative selected two priorities for its initial work: access to healthy food and mental health and resilience within specific populations including the area’s Latino, Hmong, and Karen communities. HealthEast Foundation provided \$700,000 in start-up funding for two, 18-month prototype programs: East Side Table, which seeks to develop food skills, increase

consumption of healthy food, and affect long-term health outcomes among communities experiencing the greatest health disparities, and the East Side Mental Health & Stress Resilience Partnership, which seeks to build stress-resilience and holistic well-being among targeted low-income community members. The collaborative has received additional funding from private foundations and has a commitment from HealthEast Foundation to be a featured funding priority in 2017.

A proactive approach to community health strategies will be essential in the emerging

value-based reimbursement landscape. As organizations position to implement robust solutions to address health disparities, to foster preventive care, and to mitigate social determinants of health governing boards must consider the vibrant opportunity to engage the greater community not only as advocates but also as financial investors in creating a healthier, shared future. ●

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