

GREATER TOGETHER COMMUNITY FUNDS:

A PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING PROCESS ACROSS 29 COMMUNITIES

IN 2019, THE HARTFORD FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC GIVING established a \$100,000 fund for each of the 29 towns in its service area. These funds will be distributed by the Hartford Foundation through an inclusive and participatory process led by an Advisory Committee made up of town residents that truly reflect their town.

THE GREATER TOGETHER COMMUNITY FUNDS (GTCF) GOALS, TRANSLATED INTO OUR MANGO METAPHOR:

- 1 Support the community in taking ownership around the needs in their towns**
Support the community in accepting the mango and helping them to understand how best to prepare it to support the health of their community.
- 2 Encourage broad and inclusive civic engagement**
Encourage broad and inclusive ways of using the mango, including participatory and collaborative processes to prepare and share the mango with each other.
- 3 Anchor the Hartford Foundation in each town**
Strengthen connections and relationships between the Foundation and the community through the gift of the mango.



HOW IS THE HARTFORD FOUNDATION SUPPORTING TOWNS WITH THIS WORK?



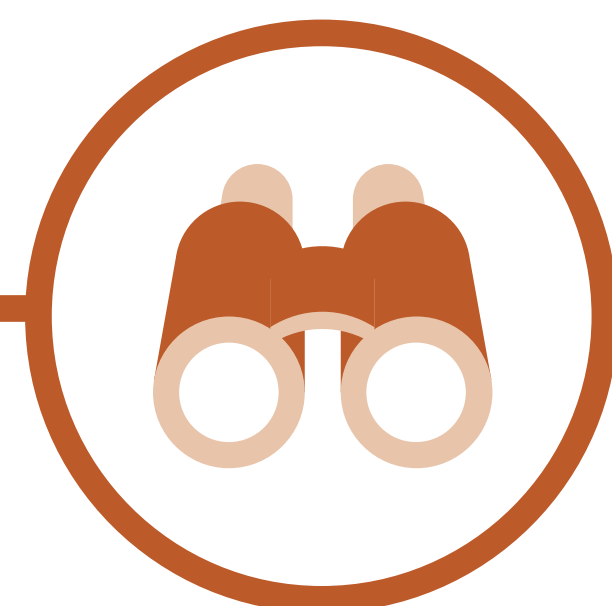
Program staff monitor town progress, and provide encouragement and strategies when there is a lack of forward motion



Program staff attend most meetings, provide guidance and support with meeting planning and facilitation, and share resources and ideas



The Foundation developed toolkits with resources for meetings, including flyer templates, interview questions, recruitment ideas, operating guidelines, and how to develop an RFP process.

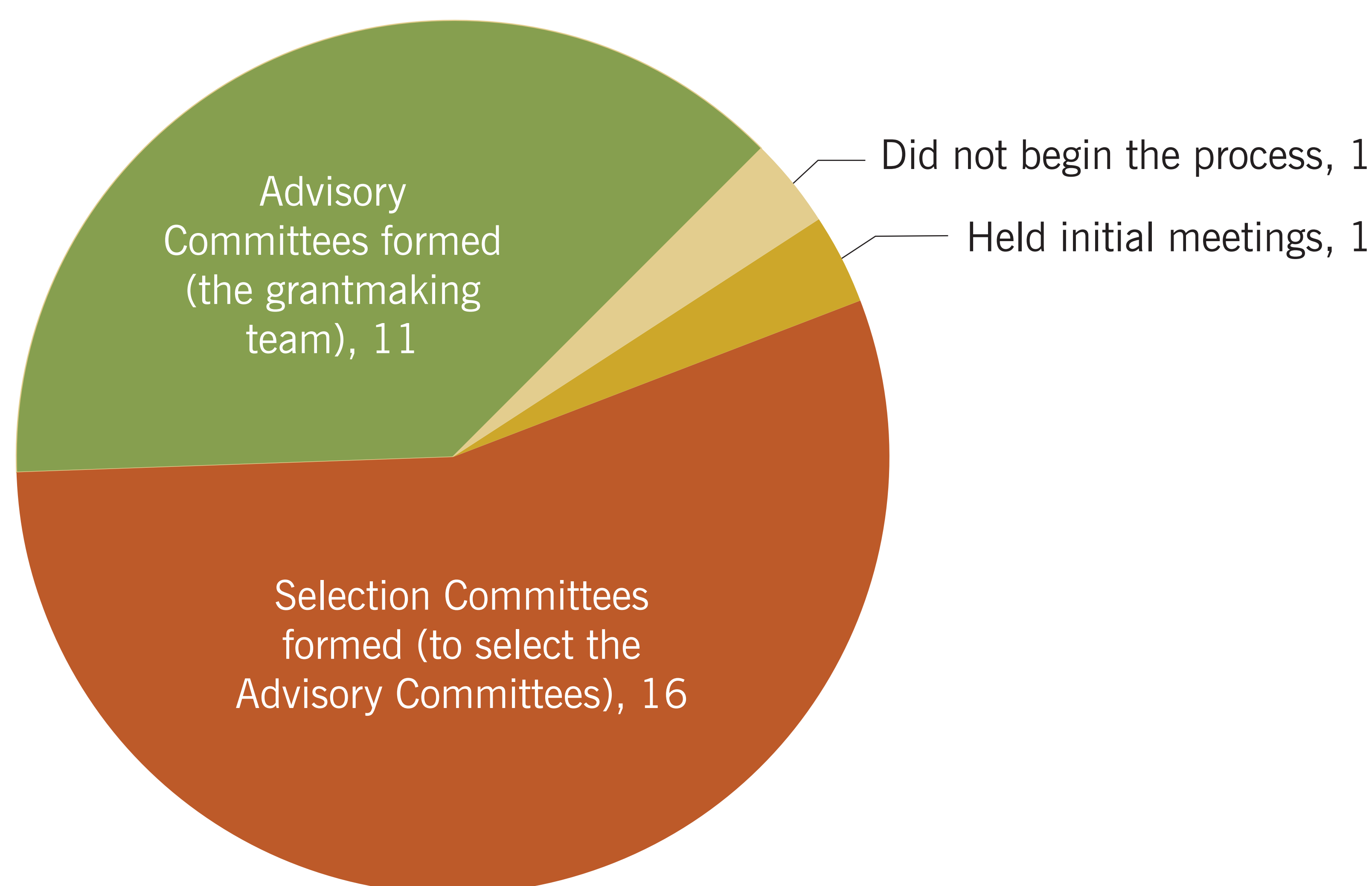


Program staff hold the long-range vision for the program, helping towns to balance the day-to-day administrative tasks while moving towards the deeper goals of inclusion.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR A PROGRAM LIKE THIS?

Is it in forming committees, going through a grantmaking process, and awarding grants? Or is it in supporting towns in building an inclusive and participatory process - which takes more time and involves more discomfort, but in the long run creates a stronger community? The Foundation has had to balance these two purposes together, responding to competing priorities from the program staff, town residents, agency leadership, and the Board of Directors.

COMMUNITY PROGRESS DURING YEAR ONE:



MANGO METAPHOR:

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN buying a mango yourself and getting a mango as a gift?

When a mango is purchased, we might think in this way:

Today I really want to eat a mango.

I will go purchase a mango.

I know how I want to prepare it the way I like it.

At the end, we will be satisfied because we have fulfilled the objective of eating a mango.

When a mango is given as a gift, we might think in this way:

I don't know if I want a mango today but it's a good opportunity.

How lucky I am. I am looking forward to eating a mango today!

Maybe I'll save it for tomorrow or I can change the dessert I thought for today.

I'm not sure if the other option I had in mind would have been better.

The Hartford Foundation has offered the gift of a mango to the 29 communities. What does the organization need to do to ensure that the community is excited to receive the mango, use it for its own purposes, and be convinced that it was a good decision?

SOME ISSUES THAT THE FOUNDATION IS EXPLORING AS THEY PROVIDE SUPPORT TO TOWNS INCLUDE:

- Finding the right balance with communities in terms of encouraging towns to take ownership of the process and self-organize, while also wanting to make sure that the communities are taking inclusion into serious consideration
- Recognizing and addressing the tension between differing understandings and practices of inclusion
- Balancing the logistical and project management aspects of this work while also having the time and mental space to keep track of the larger community fund goals
- How to provide support for communities on topics that the Foundation is only just learning how to implement in their own work, such as being intentional about equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Identifying and providing the technical assistance support that is needed to fulfill the goals of the program
- How to negotiate the inherent power imbalance of providing support to communities in their role as a representative of the Foundation, and how this dual role might affect community receptivity to the program's goals

WHAT DOES SHIFTING POWER LOOK LIKE IN THIS WORK?

- Initial meetings to present the project demonstrated shared roles and responsibilities among HFPG staff, as well as ample opportunities for questions from communities
- The Foundation made it clear, at initial meetings and beyond, that they want to work with communities to develop plans and processes as the program is being implemented
- The Foundation staff are present at community meetings, offering support and feedback as needed, but allowing committee members to make final decisions
- Toolkits contain resources, but are not mandated - allowing communities to make decisions about what was useful for them, and to adapt Toolkit resources for their purposes.
- The Foundation has provided training on technical skills, allowing communities to manage processes themselves without needing to ask for help
- The Foundation recognizes the expertise that town residents have and can share with others