



GREATER TOGETHER COMMUNITY FUNDS

Year One Summary Report • October 15, 2020



collaborative.org

Collaborative for Educational Services

Presented by the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES)

Sarah Bankert

Catherine Brooks

Kate Lytton

Romina Pacheco

Rossana Salazar

Graphic design by Lauren Parent



INTRODUCTION: 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.

HFPG 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?

The first gift of the mango came at the regional kick-off meetings. Some communities accepted it right

away, and used it for their purposes. They may have accepted the mango because they knew what to do with it. They were ready for the mango! Perhaps some members already loved mangos.

Some communities accepted the mango initially, but decided to pass the mango on to others. Perhaps it was not the right time for them, or they did not know what to do with the mango.

Some communities accepted the mango, but held onto it without doing anything with it. They needed more time before being ready to work with it.

And some communities have not yet accepted the mango.

In accepting the gift of the mango, the communities begin to make it their own. HFPG may have ideas about the best uses of a mango. Perhaps they believe that the best use of a mango is making it into a cake. But the communities take the mango and make it into many things: cake, jelly, using the skin for a healing tea, fruit salad, mango ceviches, mango flan, chicken with mango...there truly are infinite ways to prepare a mango. We could call this mango-acceptance-adaptation process *taking ownership around the needs in their towns*.

In accepting the gift of the mango, the communities also formed or deepened a relationship with the Foundation. From the Selection Committee reflections, we see initial evidence of anchoring the Foundation in each town through this act of acceptance. As communities accept the gift of the mango, they do not just receive a mango to use with their communities; they also come into a closer relationship with the Foundation.

We can also look at the ways in which the mango is *intended* to be used (goals) versus how it is *actually* used (practices) to better understand the ways in which each group at each level in the project understands and defines success. We can look for ways in which the gift of the mango is shared by groups – through relationships and collaboration – both between communities, as well as between the Foundation and the community. With each relationship established, many mango dishes are made – imagine what that would look like if we spread it out on the table!

We believe it is helpful to think in metaphors, because they are universally understood by everyone, no matter their background. We also think there is something important about our selection of the mango in particular. The mango itself, as opposed to other fruits, may be considered novel to some people in Connecticut, but other people may be quite familiar with mango, depending on whether it is part of their cultural culinary heritage. Following the metaphor, this work may be new to some, but perhaps not as new to others. We would also like to elevate the framing of the mango as gift. This word “gift” is not typically used to describe the exchange that is happening between the Foundation and the communities, and yet, we think it best describes the emotional tone that we have observed the CF team demonstrate to each other, and to the communities. The framing of this exchange as “gift” is also rooted in indigenous ways of interacting and building relationships. We bring this forward as an example of one of the myriad ways in which this project may be viewed by people involved in this project, whether at the Foundation, CES, or in the communities.

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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Defining Success	6
<i>How does the Hartford Foundation define success for this program?</i>	
Implementation and Uptake	13
<i>To what extent are program implementation and community uptake aligned with HFPG's implementation plan?</i>	
Community Response	20
<i>How are communities responding to the Greater Together Community Fund Initiative?</i>	
Supports	30
<i>What supports are needed by community Advisory Committees as they 1) establish and sustain inclusive outreach; 2) identify needs in their communities, and 3) establish grantmaking processes?</i>	
Power Imbalances	33
<i>How will the Foundation and communities address the inherent power imbalances between funder and grantee?</i>	
Building Shared Power	36
<i>How does the evaluation team partner in building shared power with community and Foundation stakeholders?</i>	
Conclusion	38
Appendices	39
Appendix I: Sources	39
Appendix II: Journey Towards Inclusion	41
Appendix III: Protocol for Note Card Exercise	42
Appendix IV: Dimensions of Success	44
Appendix V: Town Progress Over Time	45
Appendix VI: Summary of Community Status by Community Type	46

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects on the first year of implementation of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's (HFPG) Greater Together Community Funds (GTCF) program. As stated on the HFPG website, "The purpose of the Greater Together Community Funds is to support the community in taking ownership around the needs in their towns, encourage broad and inclusive civic engagement and anchor the Hartford Foundation in each town." This report explores the ways in which HFPG and the 29 communities in its service area have begun to meet these three goals.

This report is structured around the following evaluation questions, developed by the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) in partnership with the Community Funds (CF) team overseeing the GTCF program. Each question is explored in greater detail in the report, drawing on evidence from many sources to answer the questions to the best of our ability. A brief summary of our findings in each area follows.

HOW DOES THE HARTFORD FOUNDATION DEFINE SUCCESS FOR THIS PROGRAM?

As expected, the broad understanding of success for GTCF at the Hartford Foundation relates to the three goals noted above. This has been a consistent focus of the CF team and of HFPG leadership. Our report documents ways in which HFPG has both shifted and stayed consistent in their understanding of these goals and how to implement them. This includes:

- Consistent and intentional support around shifting power to communities to implement a town-level grantmaking process, including modeling inclusive practices through the ways that the CF team works on and presented this program
- Initial outreach and continued support to bring a broad range of people into the decision making process in each community
- A consistent understanding of inclusion as both a process (resulting in a Selection Committee or Advisory Committee that is representative of the community) and a result (eventual funding of programs that HFPG might not typically fund, and the establishment of new relationships outside of HFPG's current sphere).

Our report also explores how, over the course of the first year of implementation, HFPG's understanding of success for the program began to be associated with certain benchmarks for community progress, and how this shifting understanding of success resulted in a greater emphasis on "results" (the establishment of committees and the beginning of the grantmaking process) rather than "process" (the work that goes into forming these committees).

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNITY UPTAKE ALIGNED WITH HFPG'S IMPLEMENTATION PLAN?

Program implementation and community uptake have proceeded steadily throughout the first half of 2020, even in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting stay-at-home orders. As of early July 2020, 11 communities have formed Advisory Committees, and an additional 16 communities have formed Selection Committees. Only one community (Enfield) is still forming a Selection Committee, and one community (East Hartford) has not begun to move GTCF forward.

A demographic survey of Selection Committee members indicates that they are predominantly white, highly educated, age 45 and above, and female. We have not yet surveyed Advisory Committee members, but anecdotal information from the towns that have formed Advisory Committees indicates that Advisory Committee members are more diverse than those of the Selection Committees. This is not surprising, as Selection Committee members are often chosen on the basis of their connections within the towns that they represent, while Advisory Committee members are chosen to represent the people in the towns. The Selection Committees have played a crucial role in the continuum of shifting power from the Foundation to the communities.

HOW ARE COMMUNITIES RESPONDING TO THE GREATER TOGETHER COMMUNITY FUND INITIATIVE?

Overall, community response to the GTCF project has been strong, as is reflected in the high level of implementation to date. Even the two communities that have not yet formed Selection Committees are not lagging behind because of negative reactions from the community, but rather because of COVID-19 and/or the lack of a strong organizing force in the community. Many communities have moved ahead quickly with the work, and Selection Committee members with whom we spoke expressed strong support for the GTCF initiative and gratitude to HFPG for developing it.

All of the communities have needed some capacity building as they undertake this project. Many communities were in need of encouragement and structure from the CF team to begin their process. Some also needed support with administrative details, particularly once teams shifted to working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and a greater familiarity with technology tools was necessary. HFPG provided toolkits of resources for community teams, which are described in more detail in the report. In addition, CF team members attended nearly every community meeting and provided support with issues as they arose at meetings, along with sharing learnings from other towns.

WHAT SUPPORTS ARE NEEDED BY COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES AS THEY 1) ESTABLISH AND SUSTAIN INCLUSIVE OUTREACH; 2) IDENTIFY NEEDS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND 3) ESTABLISH GRANTMAKING PROCESSES?

CF team members have expressed the hope that communities grow their capacity to meet the central goals of the GTCF program. More specifically, we have heard that the CF team hopes that communities develop an understanding of:

- Inclusion, as it relates to the outreach and engagement phase of establishing an Advisory Committee
- Technical skills, such as taking meeting notes, organizing virtual meetings, developing communications materials
- All aspects of the grantmaking process, with an emphasis on participatory approaches

Some needed supports identified by community members, and addressed in Toolkits developed for this program, include concrete “how-to’s,” templates and short guides, that could be organized in a way that would be easy to access and pull out when needed. While HFPG has reviewed existing resources developed for other programs, our impression is that the CF team has had to develop their own set of unique tools and templates adapted for the GTCF program and communities, and that they have tweaked and adjusted these resources based on immediate feedback from communities, particularly those who have had quicker implementation processes.

In addition, technical assistance from HFPG has been offered by HFPG staff and CF team members, and has taken place at the one-on-one or group level, or on an as-needed, ad hoc basis.

Some particular issues that the CF team is exploring as they provide support to towns include:

1. How does the CF team find the right balance with communities in terms of encouraging towns to take ownership of the process and self-organize (Goal #1), while also wanting to make sure that the communities are taking inclusion (Goal #2) into serious consideration (and thereby determine their own membership and its relative inclusiveness)?
2. How does the CF team balance the logistical and project management aspects of the CF work while also having the time and mental space to keep track of the larger community fund goals, such as determining and responding to communities' needs (and supporting communities on both of these levels)?
3. How can the CF team provide support for communities on topics that the CF team is only just learning how to implement in their own work?
4. What technical assistance support is needed to fulfill the goals of the GTCF program, particularly above and beyond what HFPG staff can offer?
5. How should the CF team negotiate the inherent power imbalance of providing support to communities in their role as a representative of the Foundation, and how might this dual role affect community receptivity to the program's goals?

These questions are explored within the report, but they have not yet been answered – conversations around these issues will continue throughout the program's implementation.

HOW WILL THE FOUNDATION AND COMMUNITIES ADDRESS THE INHERENT POWER IMBALANCES BETWEEN FUNDER AND GRANTEE?

Shifting power is at the heart of the Greater Together Community Funds program. The program was conceptualized in recognition that communities are well aware of the needs that they face, and that the Hartford Foundation would be willing to allow communities to select the grant recipients who they felt would best meet these needs. This is an explicit change to the conventional model of community foundations, in which nonprofit organizations ask for funding and the foundation determines which requests are worthy of funding. This model shifts grantmaking power to the communities themselves.

Some ways in which we have observed HFPG addressing these power imbalances include:

- Intentionality among GTCF staff about how the kick-off meetings were run and how they shared roles and responsibilities among themselves, modeling for the community how inclusion works in practice. There was also ample room for communities to converse with the CF team during these meetings, with two group question-and-answer sessions and small group sessions in which CF team members facilitated.
- CF team members being present at Selection Committee meetings, offering support and feedback as needed, but allowing the Selection Committee members to make the final decisions around appointing Advisory Committees.
- Providing Toolkits with resources, but not mandating their use - allowing communities to make decisions about what was useful for them, and to adapt Toolkit resources for their purposes. Toolkits also provided a level of autonomy from the CF team, as communities did not have to ask for specific resources in order to move forward.

HOW DOES THE EVALUATION TEAM PARTNER IN BUILDING SHARED POWER WITH COMMUNITY AND FOUNDATION STAKEHOLDERS?

As the evaluation team for the GTCF program, we see ourselves as being a component of its implementation, and not just external observers who report back to the CF team. We recognize that our reflections and observations, particularly because they are delivered to the CF team throughout the evaluation and not only at the end, have become part of the implementation process. We have attempted to support this process in several ways:

- Internal conversations as well as conversations with the CF team, which have included discussions about the tensions and issues involved with shifting power to the community.
- One-on-one conversations, held monthly between individual members of the CF team and the evaluation team, have also been opportunities to reflect on building shared power.
- Participation in some difficult conversations with the CF team, including around restructured expectations for the project from leadership, and around racial violence and oppression as well as community and institutional response to it.

We at CES are not yet at the stage where we are partnering with community stakeholders or having conversations with them about power sharing. However, our plan is to develop a participatory evaluation process that will involve Advisory Committees in developing evaluation questions and determining the best way to answer and report on them. This work will form the backbone of our evaluation in Years Two and Three of the GTCF evaluation.

A NOTE ON PERSPECTIVE

The goals of the Greater Together Community Funds are to support communities in taking ownership around the needs in their towns, encourage broad and inclusive civic engagement, and anchor the Hartford Foundation in each of the 29 towns that it serves. A program like this, centering the community in such major ways, requires an evaluation lens that honors the role that the community plays in driving the process. Thus, our evaluation team follows an *asset-based perspective* that seeks to focus on strengths rather than on weaknesses. This is not to say that we have an uncritical view of the areas where the program could improve. Rather, what this means is that we understand that every person and community involved has something to contribute that supports the purpose of the program; therefore, we pay special attention to those contributions first and foremost.

Engaging in an evaluation process that follows an asset-based perspective requires that outside evaluators learn *with* the people involved. We do not view ourselves as researchers standing on a balcony, looking from the top at what is happening on the ground. Instead, we understand our role as learning partners: inviting those involved with the GTCF to share their stories with us in order to co-create possibilities with the tools we have available. We view those involved in the program as the owners or authors of the stories that deserve respect. We do so by listening closely to their voices with genuine curiosity. In our role as learning partners, we strive to understand an unfolding story where those most impacted by the decision-making process are the ones taking the lead.

Additionally, an asset-based perspective highlights the unrecognized or underutilized gifts and sources of strength in individuals or the community that align with the purpose of the program and support its goals. These gifts may come, for example, in the form of material goods and physical space, skills, social connections or networks, natural resources, cultural practices, historical background, and/or established institutions and associations, just to name a few. Ultimately, by applying an asset-based perspective, our intention is to enhance and support the GTCF program. As a result, in this report we thread an asset-based perspective throughout the document. We connect the micro-assets to macro-environment and opportunities. That is, we name the areas where individuals, communities, and processes enrich the program while noting the ones where there is room for growth. For example: when discussing the movement toward achieving *Inclusion* as a central goal of the GTCF program, we highlight how the HFPG's understanding of Inclusion has shifted over time to gain more depth. This deeper understanding perhaps would not have been possible without the collective reflection and individual contributions of those involved.

HOW DOES THE HARTFORD FOUNDATION DEFINE SUCCESS FOR THIS PROGRAM?

SOURCES¹

Meetings between the CF team and the CES evaluation team

CES notes from fall kick-off meetings

Interviews with CF team members

Interviews with HFPG Leadership

HOW DOES HFPG UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING KEY CONCEPTS EMBEDDED IN THE PURPOSE OF THE GTCF PROJECT?

Throughout the year, the HFPG has consistently referenced the three goals of supporting the community in taking ownership around the needs in their towns, encouraging broad and inclusive civic engagement, and anchoring the Foundation in each town. What does the Foundation mean by each of these goals and the words embedded in them, and how have they have put them into practice?

Ownership and Anchoring

HFPG has made clear from the inception of the project that its success relies heavily on communities taking ownership of the process; indeed, this is the only way in which achieving the

program's design of shifting decision-making power to the communities would be possible. In the section **What supports are needed by community Advisory Committees?** we dive into the ways in which HFPG has supported communities to “accept the mango” and make the project their own. In that section we also discuss the goal to anchor the Foundation in each town, the different views of what that looks like, and how the HFPG has provided support for this aspect of the program.

Broad

This term refers to the reach or spread of the GTCF program in reference to the second goal of encouraging broad and inclusive civic engagement. While we know that the implementation of this aspect of the goal will not be observable in great detail until Years Two and Three, we can say that the HFPG's reach into communities to engage people in the kick-off meetings was deeper and broader than anything they had done before. This resulted in 380 people attending the kick-off meetings, and 278 people to date engaged in community-level GTCF meetings.

Inclusive

From the very first meeting between CES and the CF team, we have been in conversation about the *goals and definitions of inclusion as they relate to the community*. We have heard much articulated verbally by Leadership and the CF team, and we'd like to offer a concise summary of what we've heard:

Inclusion is both a process and a result. An inclusive outreach and selection process results in a Selection Committee and/or Advisory Committee that is representative of the community, in as many aspects as possible, including race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity and ability. The process by which this happens involves outreach and communication strategies to reach people who are not typically represented within community decision-making processes.

¹ These and other data sources are described in more detail in Appendix I: Sources.

An inclusive grantmaking process results in projects or programs that the Foundation may not typically fund, and extends relationships between the Foundation and the community in new ways. The process by which this happens involves a participatory decision-making process that values the perspectives of everyone in the Advisory Committee, and within the community. It also may involve an analysis of how power operates within communities and processes to address those power differentials.²

We address issues of inclusion in more detail in the section below: **GTCTF and Inclusion - A Shifting Story**. We address issues of power shifting in the final two sections of the report: **How will the Foundation and communities address the inherent power imbalances between funder and grantee?** and **How does the evaluation team partner in building shared power with community and Foundation stakeholders?**

GTCTF AND INCLUSION - A SHIFTING STORY

“Inclusion” always needs to be defined within a context, and its meaning and power change depending on that context. For this section, we will discuss the definition and practices of inclusion as we have observed it, within the different levels of the HFPG Leadership, the CF team, the communities (to the extent that data is available), and how those definitions and practices have shifted over time. We separate the goals or definition of inclusion from the practice of inclusion, because we understand those may be different. The definition of inclusion is really pointing to the way in which inclusion is understood and talked about. The practice of it is related to the observed changes in behavior.

WHAT HAS HFPG STATED ABOUT ITS GOALS WITH REGARDS TO INCLUSION?

Inclusion is a top priority for the GTCTF program, both in terms of stated goals as well as practices. Goal #2 of the GTCTF program aims to “Encourage broad and inclusive civic engagement.” A public fact sheet about the program that appears on the HFPG website provides three main steps that a community needs to undertake in order to access funds, starting with the first:

*Each town must establish an **inclusive Advisory Committee** made up of town residents as well as an **inclusive process** to identify community needs and make grants from the town’s Community Funds.*

The CES team has engaged the CF team in periodic reflection processes to better understand their definition and practice of inclusion. In August 2019, the CES team produced a tree framework (Appendix II) to illustrate what we were hearing from the CF team at that time in terms of their definitions of inclusion. The framework has since been updated with information reflecting Year One practices.

WHAT HAS HFPG PUT INTO PRACTICE WITH REGARDS TO INCLUSION?

INTERNAL PRACTICES:

To answer this question, it is helpful to look both at the Leadership and CF team levels. At the Leadership team level, we have observed a shift in practices with regards to staffing structures and work culture. As part of the internal reorganization to support the GTCTF program, HFPG Leadership brought together

² We mention “power” within the definition of inclusion that the HFPG is operating under because we have heard it mentioned a number of times, but we want to qualify it by saying that we do not know if this aspect of the definition has been embraced by all HFPG staff involved in the GTCTF program.

people across functions and silos to populate the CF team, and they empowered that team to develop the vision and workplan for the GTCF program. As one Leadership member put it: “[We] were hands-off... there was no micromanagement; we really let them come up with what they wanted, and then we were ready to hit the ground running.”

There have been mixed sentiments as to how the relatively independent, team-based approach has worked thus far. A meeting between CF team members and HFPG Leadership in early 2020 revealed differences in perspectives about the amount of leeway that the CF team should have in shaping the program (see section below: **From the May 2020 Quarterly Memo: Shifts in Expectations, Staffing, and Funding During the First Year of Implementation**). The notes from this meeting describe potential issues such as lack of oversight (potentially due to Leadership turnover), confusion among the CF team due to shifting messages from Leadership about their level of independence and the progress they had made so far, and the challenges that team members face managing roles on multiple teams. Leadership and CF team members have both stressed to us that working in a team, across functions, is a new way of working for the Foundation, and that all parties are open to learning and adapting as the program continues to mature.

DEVELOPING THE GTCF PROGRAM:

Another significant way in which the Foundation has shifted practice with regards to inclusion is by the *participatory or shared-power design of the GTCF program itself*. In all other programs, except for Giving Circles and donor-advised funds, the Foundation makes decisions about the funding it allocates. The decision-making structure of the GTCF program is a significant departure from “business as usual.” The \$2.9 million investment puts communities at the forefront of the decision-making process and greatly expands the number and types of people involved in these processes. HFPG Leadership sees the shifting of decision-making from the Foundation to the communities as the primary application of “inclusion,” and has tended to focus on grantmaking as the most important outcome of that process.

Another example of *embedding inclusion within the program design* is the multi-part process for selecting Advisory Committee membership. There were three steps that communities were asked to engage in before “getting to grants”; the first step was to attend a kick-off meeting to learn more about the program; from there, they were asked to convene a Selection Committee, whose job it would be to determine an inclusive process to recruit Advisory Committee members; once the Advisory Committee was in place, it would be expected to apply an inclusive and participatory grantmaking process. This multi-step process allows for communities to consider inclusion at multiple points; at the breakout groups during the kick-off meetings, at the Selection Committee level, and at the Advisory Committee level. The role of the Selection Committee in the process allowed for the communities to assume responsibility for the program and to give much thought to ways to conduct outreach and recruitment within the community that would result in an inclusive Advisory Committee.

THE GTCF ROLLOUT:

Within the rollout of the GTCF program, we have observed many examples of the CF team modeling inclusive practices with regards to program development and outreach during the kick-off meetings. The CF team was intentional about their communication and outreach strategies in preparation for these

events. They used referrals, personal invitations, professional networks, and word-of-mouth to find people within communities to include on their invite list. During the event registration process, they asked people if there are barriers to attendance that the Foundation could address, such as providing accessibility, childcare, or other accommodations. During the presentation portion of the event, they shared the presentation roles and responsibilities, modeling a team-based approach (rather than a hierarchical approach) to sharing information. During the events, we observed several practices that supported the approach to “doing things differently.” This included such practices as:

- The note card activity (see Appendix III).
- Maintaining a listening and supportive posture during group breakout sessions, both providing information as needed but also encouraging the community members to begin to step forward in their groups to provide direction and leadership.
- During the presentation, inclusion was highlighted as a top priority. As a result, we observed many of the breakout groups engaged in thoughtful discussion about what inclusion meant to them and how they might begin to think about applying it within their town's process.
- During the breakout groups, providing demographic data on each community, as a way for communities to recognize and understand the types of diversity (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, income) that each community possesses.

A moment of practice that particularly stood out to us was when a member of the audience asked a question, a version of which had been asked at many meetings, which can be paraphrased as: “How are you going to shift decision-making responsibilities to the communities without a structure or group set up?” To which one of the CF team members said “Welcome to the participatory process!” This acknowledgment in real time of the nature of this work stood out to us. The implicit message to the community was:

- *We don't have all of the answers!* [Modeling HFPG as co-learners]
- *We want you to step forward to help shape this program.* [Invitation to work together to shift decision-making power]
- *This is what we are here tonight to do.* [Reminder that the HFPG is a ready and willing partner]

EXISTING AND ONGOING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) WORK WITHIN HFPG:

HFPG is also doing organization-wide work around diversity, equity, and inclusion and what it means for their work with communities. We do not have additional information about this to share in this report, but we thought it was important to note that this is happening and will have an impact on GTCF implementation.

TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE CF TEAM HAVE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF SUCCESS? HOW DOES THIS CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SUCCESS CHANGE OVER TIME? HOW IS THIS COMMUNICATED TO COMMUNITY TEAMS?

A previous report to the GTCF team, delivered in May 2020, explored the shifting understanding of success for this project among CF team members and HFPG Leadership. The relevant information from this report is extracted below, in the section called **“From the May 2020 Quarterly Memo: Shifts in Expectations, Staffing, and Funding During the First Year of Implementation.”**

The information below refers to internal understandings of success and their changes over time, communicated and shared within the CF team and HFPG Leadership. We have less specific evidence of communication with the communities about success. However, we know from our conversations with the few Selection Committees that completed their process that they generally see their work as successful. When asked why, a frequent response was that they appointed a diverse and capable Advisory Committee. For them, this represents success as they understand the GTCF program.

FROM THE MAY 2020 QUARTERLY MEMO: SHIFTS IN EXPECTATIONS, STAFFING, AND FUNDING DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the GTCF project implementation, HFPG has made a significant commitment of staff time as well as funds. The Board of Directors and senior staff members recognized that this program represented a very different way of doing business for the Foundation, and that there would need to be a substantial amount of support provided to communities as they develop processes for an inclusive approach to grantmaking. CF team members would need time to support these processes, by attending community meetings, developing tools for dissemination to communities, and deploying technical assistance providers as needed. As one CF team member commented, this program is the equivalent of 29 separate giving circles, and as giving circles are staff-intensive, the GTCF will be that much more so.

One way of thinking about implementation of any program is the Dimensions of Success model from the Interaction Institute for Social Change (Appendix IV). This model shows success as a triangle, with the three points being results, process, and relationships. Program goals can address any of these points, and at different points in the program’s implementation, attention may shift from one point to the other. Initial implementation of the GTCF program was heavily focused toward process and relationships, with the understanding that substantial work needed to be done in these areas before results could be expected.

In the beginning of 2020, as Selection Committees began to form in communities around the region, senior leadership encouraged the CF team to shift attention from developing processes and relationships toward encouraging results, in the form of Advisory Committees being formed and grants recommended. This shift came at the direction of the Board of Directors, but was also supported by senior leadership, who believed that community members would be encouraged to continue this process if they saw concrete results of their work.

This shift was not without tension. The CF team was in agreement about the importance of results, and had developed a workplan that lays out targets for grantmaking. They agreed with senior leadership that it is necessary to get grants out to the communities in order to validate the progress that has been made

so far, and encourage continued progress. However, they also recognized the need to continue a heavy focus on process and relationships, as the necessary building blocks toward achieving results consistent with the program's goals of participatory and inclusive grantmaking. As one member of the team stated, "The CF team sees the work as not just looking at the impact of grant dollars but also about how people are engaged...an inclusive process may affect more people through the process than through, say a park bench."

Further, the CF team believed that the new focus on results implied that their past workplan had not been sufficiently results-oriented, which had not been communicated to them by senior leadership at the time it was developed and reviewed. A meeting in February between the CF team and several members of senior leadership helped to resolve some of this tension, and since that time there has been ongoing participation by at least one Vice President at team meetings in order to ensure that the CF team and senior leadership are consistent in their understanding of expectations and progress.

Staffing Changes: The original staffing plan for the GTCF³ allocated 1.7 FTE of time in 2019 and 2.5 FTE of time in 2020, spread across four CF team members. Since the project began, one staff member, a senior program officer, has resigned and another senior program officer has required medical leave of several months. To continue to staff the project at necessary levels, HFPG reassigned a program manager to the CF team and hired a new program manager.

While the core team has remained at four people, the two newly-assigned program managers are spending more of their time on this project than did the people they replaced. This is reflected in the 2020 budget,⁴ which shows 2.75 FTE of staff time spread across the existing four members of the CF team, as well as .75 FTE for the senior program officer who has been on leave at the time but who is anticipated to return in April 2020.⁵ This adjusted budget reflects the desire of HFPG Leadership for a strong push toward establishing Advisory Committees in most towns, and an increase in staffing to support that goal.

Also, in December 2019, one of the two vice presidents overseeing the CF team's work retired. The shared responsibility for CF team oversight was transferred to the Vice President of Marketing and Communications. The Vice President of Development has continued to oversee the project from its inception.

Budget Changes - Technical Assistance: In October of 2019, the GTCF team requested a budget of \$15,000 for technical assistance in 2019 and \$232,500 for technical assistance in 2020.

- The 2019 funds would be used to orient 10 consultants to the project for 10 hours each, at a cost of \$150/hour.
- The 2020 funds included 50 hours of TA consultancy for each of the 29 towns as well as 100 hours of support for the CF team, all at a rate of \$150/hour.

³ From a budget dated October 1, 2019

⁴ From a budget dated February 18, 2020

⁵ This is the original text from the May 2020 Quarterly report. This staff member did not actually return until June 2020 and is not anticipated to resume full-time work until August 2020.

However, the initial HFPG 2020 budget did not include any funds for technical assistance for the GTCF program. An exploration of the reasons for this only yielded the explanation that the people developing the budget had not received the request for funds for technical assistance, and no one was able to determine why this was the case. Recognizing that TA consultancy would be an important part of the work going forward, however, in February of 2020 a new budget for the GTCF included \$50,000 for technical assistance to towns. This assistance will be targeted toward the towns that have formed Advisory Committees, with the recognition that towns will be forming Advisory Committees throughout 2020 and not all will need assistance throughout the year. It is estimated that this work will begin in June and will include 316 hours, spread across 19 communities over time as they develop Advisory Committees, at a rate of \$150/hour.

Budget Changes - Support to Towns: The October 1, 2019 budget for GTCF did not include any funds for direct support to towns in 2019. This budget allocated \$2,500 to each of the 29 towns (\$72,500) in 2020 to support communications, accessibility, and removing barriers to participation.

The February 18, 2020 budget allocated \$500 to each of the 29 towns (\$14,500) to support communications, accessibility, and removing barriers to participation.

Clarified Expectations about Targets: During the fall of 2019, the CF team developed a detailed workplan for GTCF that included the following targets for 2020:

- Advisory Committees established in 25 of 29 towns
- 5-10 Advisory Committees developing participatory grantmaking processes
- At least one town has made a recommendation for a grant

In early 2020, the CF team and the two vice presidents overseeing the program refined this workplan to include mid-year targets, and an increase in the number of towns that have recommended a grant by the end of the year. The new workplan, dated February 2020, sets the following targets for 2020:

- By June 15, 2020: Advisory Committees established in 15 of 19 towns
- By July 15, 2020: 1-2 towns recommend a grant
- By December 1, 2020: 14 towns recommend a grant
- By December 31, 2020: Advisory Committees established in 25 of 29 towns

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNITY UPTAKE ALIGNED WITH HFPG'S IMPLEMENTATION PLAN?

SOURCES

Meetings between the CF team and the CES evaluation team

CES notes from fall kick-off meetings

Kick-off meeting participant survey results

Interviews with CF team members

Interviews with HFPG Leadership

Electronic records of community meetings kept by CF team members

Demographic survey of Selection Committee members

Conversations with communities that have finished their Selection Committee process

Program implementation has proceeded steadily throughout the first half of 2020, even in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting stay-at-home orders (see **Impact of COVID-19 on GTCF**). As of early July 2020, 11 communities have formed Advisory Committees, and an additional 16 communities have formed Selection Committees. Only one community (Enfield) is still forming a Selection Committee, and one community (East Hartford) has not begun to move GTCF forward (See Appendix V).

Implementation was by necessity slowed by the pandemic. In mid-March of 2020, the governor of Connecticut issued stay-at-home orders and communities temporarily ceased their GTCF involvement as everyone adjusted to the new restrictions. Over time, most communities began holding meetings by telephone and video conference, with the support of the CF staff. Nearly all of them completed the Selection Committee appointment process, and the new Selection Committees began work on an application process for Advisory Committees, working through email, shared documents, and remote meetings. However, in some towns the process has been slowed or stalled (see **Which Towns are in Need of Support?**)

HOW DID HFPG COMMUNICATE WITH TOWNS ABOUT THE PURPOSE AND OPPORTUNITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE COMMUNITY FUNDS?

HFPG began communicating with towns about the GTCF program in June of 2019, when CF team members conducted an orientation to the GTCF program for municipal leaders. CF team members later worked with these leaders to identify people in each town to invite

to the kick-off meetings that were held in the fall of 2019.

HFPG then conducted eight kick-off meetings during the fall of 2019, covering the entire 29-town service area. Each kick-off meeting consisted of a slide presentation by CF team members, opportunities for questions, and a facilitated conversation among residents of each town about how they can move the work forward.

The focus of these initial meetings was on the need for an inclusive process within each community in doing this work. Most attendees were receptive to this idea, although they often had clarifying questions. A follow-up survey asked attendees what they learned from meetings. Most mentioned the processes and procedures around the GTCF program, with around 10% addressing issues of diversity and inclusion.

Each town was assigned a CF team member as their main connection with HFPG. As towns began to implement their process, many leaned heavily on their CF team liaison to assist with planning and logistics. A CF team

member noted that most communities required her help to initiate their process, with her needing to send initial emails encouraging them to meet. Many also needed logistical support throughout the process.

A review of records of town-level meetings shows that CF team members have attended (in some cases, by phone or Internet connection) nearly 90% of the planning meetings that towns have held. The support provided by the CF team members has taken various forms, including facilitating meetings, assistance with developing agendas, taking minutes, and managing correspondence and other logistics. CF team members' presence at these meetings has allowed them additional opportunities to communicate the goals of the GTCF while the communities move toward creating Advisory Committees.

One way in which CF team members are continuing to communicate the goals of the GTCF process to Selection Committees is by supporting a focus on inclusion as the committees plan a process for selecting an Advisory Committee. This communication has mostly taken the form of supporting communities in their efforts to ensure outreach to as many populations as possible during the Advisory Committee selection process, with particular attention to navigating the challenges posed by COVID-19. We have also heard of a few specific examples of deeper conversations around inclusion. These are described in more detail below, in **“What evidence is there of capacity-building within communities as they meet this challenge? How did the CF team or other HFPG resources contribute to this capacity-building?”**

However, we have not heard from CF team members or from communities about CF team members consistently asking provocative questions and pushing communities to contend with the larger issues around inclusion and what it means to have a participatory process. As noted previously (**How does the Hartford Foundation define success for this program?**), an initial heavy focus on inclusion as a primary component of the GTCF program later shifted toward more of a focus on moving communities through the process and forming Advisory Committees. This has required CF team members to work closely with community teams, but with less time to focus on the nuances of an inclusive process and the work needed to get there.

The above section, **“Shifts in Expectations, Staffing, and Funding During the First Year of Implementation,”** describes this and other changes to the GTCF implementation process in more detail. Any of these changes may have contributed to a reduced emphasis on challenging communities to develop inclusive and participatory processes. In addition, funding for technical assistance has been lowered, allowing fewer opportunities for expert guidance around issues of inclusion.

WHICH TOWNS FORM SELECTION COMMITTEES DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION? WHICH FORM ADVISORY COMMITTEES?

As noted above and in Appendix V, 27 of the 29 towns formed Selection Committees during the first year of implementation, and 11 of them also formed Advisory Committees.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, HFPG had established goals for the progress of communities through the stages of the GTCF program. Goals included having 15 communities establish Advisory Committees by June 15, and one or two communities recommending a grant by July 15. While most communities have resumed work since the initial COVID-19 shutdowns, some have been unable to do so, and nearly all of them have experienced some delays in their progress. For that reason, the goals noted above were not met. However, nearly all communities are making progress toward creating Advisory Committees and awarding initial grants.

See **Which towns are in need of support from HFPG in implementing this program?** and **What happens when the same model of grantmaking and support is applied to 29 different communities?** for an exploration of progress and barriers in GTCF implementation.

DO SELECTION AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES REFLECT HFPG'S GOALS FOR BREADTH AND INCLUSIVENESS?

During the first year of implementation, only the Selection Committee membership was assessed for breadth and inclusiveness. This was done through a survey that requested demographic information from individual Selection Committee members, including race/ethnicity, gender, education levels, employment status, years of town residence, and other indicators.

As of this writing, in mid July, 183 Selection Committee members in 23 communities had received surveys.⁶ There have been 122 responses, for a response rate of 67%. Among those who completed the survey:

- 88% are white.
- 83% have at least a bachelor's degree.
- 75% are female.
- 74% are age 45 or older.
- 75% (of those serving on Selection Committees in communities where they live) have lived in their communities for at least 11 years.
- 56% are currently employed, 31% are retired, and 6% are students (individuals can select more than one category to describe their workforce/student status).
- All are fluent in English. 4% reported also being fluent in Spanish and 7% reported also being fluent in another language.
- 7% experience life with a disability.
- About half are part of a religious community. Nearly all of these respondents belong to a mainstream Christian denomination. Four are Jewish, and five are either "other" or preferred not to specify their beliefs.

We looked at the racial breakdown of survey completers among towns and cities that are more racially diverse to see if the Selection Committees were reflective of the racial demographics of those communities. As Table 1 shows, the Selection Committee in Hartford is racially diverse: of seven survey respondents, two each are African-American, Latino, and White, and one is Asian. But only one of four people responding to the survey from Bloomfield is African-American, and the other three are white. In Manchester, seven of eight respondents are white and one is African-American.

The CF team noted that they expect that Selection Committees will be less racially diverse, and less representative of their communities, than will the Advisory Committees. This is because Selection Committees are often composed of people who are already well-connected in the town, and who may be participating in a town where they work and/or spend significant time rather than the town in which they live. It is the expected work of the Selection Committee to form Advisory Committees that reflect the town's population. CF team members report that Selection Committees are attuned to this expectation and it has been an important part of

⁶ Four additional communities had just received notification from the CF team about the survey, and two communities had not yet formed Selection Committees.

their planning process for selecting an Advisory Committee.

CES will be sending out demographic surveys to Advisory Committee members as these committees are formed, and will continue to track demographics for project participation overall as well as for racial diversity in the more diverse towns and cities.

TABLE 1: RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF SELECTION COMMITTEES IN MORE RACIALLY DIVERSE TOWNS AND CITIES

	# Survey Respondents / # SC Members	% African-American		% Latino		% White	
		City	SC	City	SC	City	SC
Hartford	7/9	35%	29%	44%	29%	15%	29%
Bloomfield	4/8	58%	25%	5%	0%	31%	75%
East Hartford (no Selection Committee formed as of July 2020)		25%		34%		34%	
Windsor (survey sent out in July 2020)		35%		10%		48%	
Manchester	8/10	14%	13%	14%	0%	58%	88%

WHICH TOWNS ARE IN NEED OF SUPPORT FROM HFPG IN IMPLEMENTING THIS PROGRAM? WHAT TYPE OF SUPPORT IS NEEDED, AND HOW DOES HFPG PROVIDE IT?

CF team members report that most of the towns needed their support in starting the process, first with encouragement to form a team and move forward after the kick-off meetings, and then again to resume work after everything was shut down in March (see **Impact of COVID-19 on GTCF**). Some towns have needed very little encouragement: for example, Bloomfield, which had a former HFPG staff member coordinating their Selection Committee, moved quickly through the process. Hebron was also identified as a community that quickly took ownership of the process and moved forward.

Support provided by CF team members to communities, as noted before, is primarily logistical, including emailing people to prompt them to move forward with meetings, helping them put together Doodle polls, developing agendas, and facilitating meetings. Selection Committee members with whom we spoke have been very positive about the support they have received from their CF team liaison. Several mentioned this support as being one of the most helpful parts of their process, and praised their liaison's positive energy, responsiveness, and ability to provide helpful information.

The CF team has also developed a Toolkit of resources for communities to use during this process, and some Selection Committee members noted that this has been a helpful support for them. The Toolkit and how it is used are described in greater detail below in **What supports are needed by community Advisory Committees as they 1) establish and sustain inclusive outreach; 2) identify needs in their communities, and 3) establish grantmaking processes?**

A few communities, as noted below, either have not started their process or have experienced difficulties with moving forward. Each has a different story, related to CES by the CF team member working with the community, and has received different levels of support.

Canton: Canton first convened in October. After several meetings they established their Selection Committee and charted out a plan for recruiting Advisory Committee members. As a result of the pandemic, they decided to put their work on hold.

East Granby: This community has transitioned through three different CF team members as a result of staffing changes in the GTCF program. They did not begin their process until February, and had only one meeting before the stay-at-home order was issued. They began meeting again in June and established a Selection Committee in early July.

East Hartford: East Hartford is the only community that has not yet had an initial meeting to implement GTCF. There were not a lot of community members at the kick-off meeting, and the community transitioned from one CF team member to another early in the process as staffing shifted. A librarian in the town was interested in moving the process forward and offered the library as a meeting space, but this plan was disrupted by COVID-19. The librarian and the CF team member agreed to put the plan on hold during the shutdown and resume once the library was able to reopen, but in late spring the CF team member assigned to this team needed to reduce her hours on the project. The work with East Hartford was put on hiatus in order to focus on teams that were moving forward.

Enfield: Enfield made an initial attempt to set up a meeting in December, but the timing around the holidays made this too difficult. No further progress was made until July 1, when two CF team members connected with two town employees through a telephone call. The town employees intend to start moving the process forward to form a Selection Committee.

Rocky Hill: The Rocky Hill community got off to a good start: the community quickly formed a Selection Committee and began work on a process to recruit an Advisory Committee. However, once the COVID-19 shutdown began, the community ceased all work. The Selection Committee is composed entirely of senior citizens; they were not comfortable with using technology to further the work while they were unable to meet in person. This committee will also be slow to resume in-person work even as restrictions are being lifted, because members' ages make them particularly vulnerable to the virus. The CF team member assigned to support this team noted that this issue demonstrates the importance of age diversity on the Selection Committee and not just on the Advisory Committee.

STORY: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GTCF

In March of 2020, the greater Hartford area was dramatically impacted by the arrival of COVID-19, a highly contagious and potentially lethal respiratory virus. As cases soared in nearby New York City, governors in surrounding states took action to limit the virus's spread by dramatically reducing opportunities for in-person interaction. On March 10, the governor of Connecticut declared a public health emergency, and over the next two weeks he issued bans on public gatherings and ordered the closure of schools and non-essential businesses. On March 23, the governor ordered Connecticut residents to stay

at home except for essential tasks. As of this writing, in July 2020, the state of Connecticut is engaged in a phased reopening process, but people are still encouraged to wear masks, maintain a physical distance from each other whenever possible, and to self-quarantine if they have traveled to affected areas or are showing symptoms of the virus. Only a few GTCF communities have resumed in-person meetings to work on this project; most are continuing to connect virtually.

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving remained open throughout the spring, with most employees working from home using laptops that give them full access to HFPG resources. Meetings to support the GTCF have continued using videoconferencing software. However, the virus impacted the GTCF process in several ways:

- Most communities paused their work in March and often into April, while everyone adjusted to the new restrictions and hoped they would be lifted after a few weeks. When it became apparent this would not be the case, most communities resumed their work by connecting with each other remotely. However, both Canton and Rocky Hill have chosen to suspend their work indefinitely, and other communities were substantially slowed by the inability to meet in person.
- The CF team was tasked with determining how and when to encourage communities to move forward, and which communities needed to be allowed to step back and focus on more immediate needs. Nearly all of the communities required support and encouragement from CF team members to restart their process. Some were ready to quickly resume where they had left off, but others had lost considerable momentum and needed a great deal of attention from the CF team.
- As communities with established Selection Committees moved forward with their work, the existing tension between expediting the work and focusing on inclusion grew even stronger as a result of the pandemic. While most of these communities were well-prepared to continue recruiting an Advisory Committee through electronic distribution and collection of documents, Selection Committee members expressed concern that doing so would exclude people who do not have easy access to electronic communication. The ban on public gatherings also made it difficult to reach out to residents who are not already well-connected to established channels of communication. At the same time, committees were concerned with sustaining the interest of those who had already expressed an interest in participating on the Advisory Committees. Most of these communities eventually began moving the process forward again, often with the intention of forming an Advisory Committee in the spring or summer of 2020, and then adding members as outreach to additional communities becomes possible.
- For communities that had not already established Selection Committees, the ban on in-person gatherings made progress difficult. This was particularly true in communities with higher low-income populations, as people in these communities were more heavily impacted by the virus itself and by the economic impact of business closures. For a time, the CF team gave these communities space to regroup and become ready to resume work on GTCF. By July of 2020, nearly all of these communities had begun to move forward again.

The impact of COVID-19 on all facets of life is continuing through the summer of 2020 even as the state reopens, and both the virus and its economic effects will be experienced for years to come. The implementation of and outcomes from the GTCF funds will continue to be shaped by the virus-related shutdown.

HOW ARE COMMUNITIES RESPONDING TO THE GREATER TOGETHER COMMUNITY FUND INITIATIVE?

SOURCES

Meetings between the CF team and the CES evaluation team

CES notes from fall kick-off meetings

Kick-off meeting participant survey results

Interviews with CF team members

Electronic records of community meetings kept by CF team members

Conversations with communities that have finished their Selection Committee process

Overall, community response to the GTCF initiative has been strong, as is reflected in the high level of implementation to date. Even communities that have not yet formed Selection Committees are not lagging behind because of negative reactions from the community, but rather because of COVID-19 and/or the lack of a strong organizing force in the community (see **Is there evidence of resistance or barriers to this program in communities?**, below, for a more detailed exploration of these issues). Many communities have moved ahead quickly with the work, and Selection Committee members with whom we spoke expressed strong support for the GTCF initiative and gratitude to HFPG for developing it.

WHAT ARE THE INITIAL REACTIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM COMMUNITIES AS THIS INITIATIVE IS PRESENTED TO THEM?

The GTCF was presented to community members at a series of regional meetings, held during the fall of 2019. All 29 communities were represented at these meetings, which were attended by 380 people. The meetings included presentations from HFPG staff about the GTCF program, followed by a question-and-answer period and then the opportunities for towns to work in small groups to begin the planning process. There were additional opportunities for feedback and questions at the end of the meeting, and a follow-up electronic survey was sent out the following day.

Community reaction at these meetings was very positive. Attendees were excited to have the opportunity to become involved in this process and to move the work forward in their communities. However, there were questions and concerns, most frequently heard around certain themes:

- Process questions: Who forms the Selection Committee? What is the timeline for the work? What are the steps that communities will walk through to get to the point of awarding funding?
- Expectations for committees: How many people should be on the Selection/Advisory Committees? How long are terms? Can people on the committees also be involved with organizations that ask for money?
- Funding guidelines: What types of organizations can be funded? What amount of money is available when? Can the money go to support the expenses of the committee (related to outreach, as well as subsidies for child care or transportation for committee members)?

Communities also requested technical assistance and other supports, including help with the basics of grantmaking, best practices, sample agendas and bylaws, and needs assessment tools.

Some communities raised bigger-picture issues in their questions. For example, at several meetings, participants expressed concern about the small amount of money being provided through GTCF relative to the heavy workload required to develop and implement a participatory process, particularly after the first year when the revenue stream is expected to be \$2,500 per year. The CF team was open in addressing this issue, saying that the ultimate goal of GTCF is to create a resident-led effort that supports communities in understanding and addressing their own needs. The money is an incentive to start this important work, which can lead to later efforts to pursue additional funding from HFPF or other funders, as well as other benefits of increased civic involvement. Also in response to this question, the Foundation made clear that while they couldn't make a firm commitment to additional funding beyond the initial investment, they were exploring the possibility of adding to the investment in future years.

Another issue that arose was an understanding, beginning to develop among community members and acknowledged by the CF team, that this is potentially a challenging and messy process. Communities are often accustomed to working with established leaders and following well-defined paths of decision-making, and the GTCF program forces them to think beyond their usual way of doing things. The above section **“GTCF and Inclusion - A Shifting Story”** tells the story of community members reflecting this back to the CF team, and their response: “Welcome to the participatory processes! We are intentionally shifting power dynamics.”

Following each meeting, participants were offered the opportunity to reflect on what they had learned and provide additional information to HFPF through an electronic survey. The survey was completed by 219 respondents across the 29 communities (58% of regional meeting attendees). Many respondents offered praise for HFPF, the Greater Together Community Fund Initiative, and the content of the meetings. Some examples include:

- “Huge thanks to everyone at the Foundation, and particularly the Community Funds Team, for creating such a wonderful opportunity to spread the habit of giving in all 29 towns! The gifts themselves are fantastically generous; the training that comes with them is priceless.”
- “Great follow-up and progress from previous ‘Listening Tour’ announcement. Encouraged by the organization, the backup support available and overall mission of the CF project.”
- “I very much like the concept of communities engaging in the process of how funding may change their communities by addressing critical needs and projects that benefit their community and having the community manage these funds.”
- “Presentation was professional, thought-provoking, intelligent, and interactive.”

However, some respondents raised questions or concerns, offered suggestions for changes, or indicated skepticism that the GTCF will be able to achieve its goals. These responses were previously shared in detail with HFPF in an interim memo dated January 2020. Some areas of concern included the potential impact of existing power dynamics in the community on this process, the complicated procedures for developing grantmaking committees, and how labor-intensive the work was expected to be.

WHAT IS MOTIVATING COMMUNITIES AS THEY UNDERTAKE THIS WORK?

This question will be explored in more detail with communities as we begin to attend Selection and Advisory Committee meetings held in selected communities, and also as we discuss the Selection Committee process with communities that have completed it. As we begin these latter conversations, some themes that we are hearing

include a deep love for the community that Selection Committee members call home, the recognition that there are needs in their communities that need to be addressed, and interest in being part of the process that will meet these needs.

Many Selection Committee members are well-connected in their towns, for example, through employment in schools, social services, or appointed government positions, and others have broad social connections that come from years of living in the community and being part of many different committees and organizations. They recognize that they have something to offer this process and are willing and eager to provide it.

WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE OF CAPACITY-BUILDING WITHIN COMMUNITIES AS THEY MEET THIS CHALLENGE? HOW DID THE CF TEAM OR OTHER HFPG RESOURCES CONTRIBUTE TO THIS CAPACITY-BUILDING?

All of the communities have needed some capacity building as they undertake this project. As noted above **(Which towns are in need of support from HFPG in implementing this program? What type of support is needed, and how does HFPG provide it?)**, many communities needed the CF team to provide an initial structure to begin their process. Some also needed support with administrative details, such as using Doodle polls to schedule meetings, or using video conferencing software to conduct remote meetings. This was particularly important once teams shifted to working remotely and a greater familiarity with technology tools was necessary. In fact, in mid-July 2020, the CF team and the HFPG communications team offered a training for all Advisory Committee members on using commonly accessible computer programs.

Additional capacity-building support was provided to the teams in the Toolkit (see **What supports are needed by community Advisory Committees as they 1) establish and sustain inclusive outreach; 2) identify needs in their communities, and 3) establish grantmaking processes?**). The Toolkit has been a central and ongoing way in which the team has responded to community requests for support. It has been revised several times as the CF team's understanding of community needs changes, and their understanding how to support communities has deepened and matured.

We also heard from CF team members that there were many opportunities to provide capacity-building support during the meetings that they attended. As noted before, CF team members have been present at nearly all community meetings. While they allow the community members to lead the discussions and make decisions, they also provided examples of times when they have spoken up to provide suggestions or feedback about the community's process. They have also shared learnings from other towns. Some examples that we heard include:

- A CF team member discouraged a town from requiring a resume as part the Advisory Committee application process, saying that this could discourage potential candidates who have not worked in positions where a formal resume is required.
- A CF team member was asked for feedback about how committee members led interviews. She suggested trying to make the environment feel more friendly and less like a job interview.
- A CF team member reported that she helped several towns think through the tension between moving the Advisory Committee application process along quickly, and waiting until pandemic restrictions lifted so as to be able to reach more people.

It appears that, while CF team members are providing various types of capacity-building support to community teams, this support is provided in an ad hoc manner, in response to issues that are raised or noticed during the meetings. It has been very important and useful to community members to have the CF team members present

at their meetings to provide support as needed. We expect that there are many more examples of this informal support, similar to what is described above.

However, this informal approach to providing support also has limitations. Currently, the CF team lacks a process for capturing support needs among communities, discussing them as a team, and developing plans for meeting these needs consistently. Without these plans, support from CF team members may be inconsistent.

RECOMMENDATION: As towns shift to developing long-term, stable Advisory Committees, it will be important for the CF team to find ways to assess needs around capacity-building and meet them in a systematic way.

STORY: THE EVOLVING NATURE OF CAPACITY-BUILDING SUPPORT

From the very beginning of the Greater Together Community Funds program, the HFPG knew that a major component of the program would be to support the 29 communities to establish their own local community fund guided by the goals set forth by HFPG.

Data from pre-program focus groups and listening sessions indicated that people at the community level wanted to be sure they would receive support from the Foundation in taking on this new work, and it was evident from our early conversations with the CF team that they were taking this request seriously in the design of the program. They wanted to understand the assets and needs of the community, and to figure out how to respond as best they could with resources and support.

The GTCF program was rolled out within the context of a Foundation culture that had been already engaged in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts as well as experimenting with cross-functional team-based models of organizing work. Both of these practices provide internal support and contribute to readiness for rolling out new programs like the GTCF that seek a more inclusive and participatory approach to philanthropy. With programs that seek greater participation from existing and/or new stakeholders, there is an increased need to approach the work with an openness to feedback, learning and growth so that the program can be responsive to the information and ideas coming from the communities. The CF team has demonstrated a high level of openness, of listening to communities and learning from them, while also staying true to the goals of the program and encouraging communities to take them up in the early stages of their organizing efforts.

The regional kick-off meetings were the first tangible ways in which the CF team began to hear from communities about their support needs. The kick-off meetings were a critically important period for the GTCF program, as it was the first time in which the program was being broadly introduced to the community. It was also the first time that communities were encouraged to begin the organizing effort. CF team members sat with the communities during these working group sessions and began to hear first reactions, questions, thoughts and ideas. At a meeting with the evaluation team in October, the CF team expressed enthusiasm about the level of interest within communities to embark on the work, along with some concerns about being able to keep up with the pace of the regional meetings.

Five key questions began to be articulated at this and future meetings that are relevant to this section:

1. How does the CF team find the right balance with communities in terms of encouraging towns to take ownership of the process and self-organize (Goal #1), while also wanting to make sure that the communities are taking inclusion (Goal #2) into serious consideration (and thereby determine their own membership and its relative inclusiveness)?
2. How does the CF team balance the logistical and project management aspects of the CF work while also having the time and mental space to keep track of the larger community fund goals, such as determining and responding to communities' needs (and supporting communities on both of these levels)?
3. How can the CF team provide support for communities on topics that the CF team is only just learning how to implement in their own work?
4. What technical assistance support is needed to fulfill the goals of the GTCF program, particularly above and beyond what HFPG staff can offer?
5. How should the CF team negotiate the inherent power imbalance of providing support to communities in their role as a representative of the Foundation, and how might this dual role affect community receptivity to the program's goals?

In a memo to the CF team in November 2019, the evaluation team documented these tensions and made recommendations for support for the project in line with the three overarching goals.

Around December of 2019, the CF program moved into another unofficial “phase,” characterized by reflection and “composting” of all that was learned through the kick-off meetings as well as adjusting to shifts in staffing patterns (see **From the May 2020 Quarterly Memo: Shifts in Expectations, Staffing, and Funding During the First Year of Implementation**). By June 2020, nearly 70% of communities had experienced at least one change in CF staff liaison, and 14% experienced at least two changes.

The CF team also came under the supervision of a new Vice President (VP), and a meeting was convened on February 6 between the VPs, CF team, and the evaluation team to review program goals and progress to date (see **GTCF and Inclusion - A Shifting Story for more about this meeting**). As noted earlier in the report, until that point, the CF team had shaped the work with a strong emphasis on inclusion as “process,” as opposed to inclusion as “results.” Inclusion as “process” -- in other words, changing mental models, behavior and practice as it relates to inclusion -- necessitates an increase in capacity to do so via training, whether that be one-on-one or group training, formal or informal. Due to miscommunication about the budget request from the CF team, as well as shifting emphasis on inclusion as “results,” \$50,000 in funding for technical assistance was eventually allocated to support Advisory Committees, which represented a significant reduction compared to what the CF team requested to support their interpretation of the goals of the project.

The implementation of GTCF is an example of a tension between “plug and play” approaches to program

implementation versus the deeper work of shifting culture and practice. “Plug and play” implementation happens when the program uses existing implementation practices and everyone more or less knows what to do. In these cases, outcomes are more predictable and fewer resources are needed. Shifting culture and practice often takes more time, is less predictable, requires people to learn new ways of approaching the work and is more resource-intensive. This tension is an important one to notice. Once noticed, it can be named-- and then tracked over time to be sure the project is not going too far in one direction or the other.

A factor that contributes to this tension may be the difference in emphasis on goals between those in Leadership and those on the CF team. Members of the Leadership team are more likely to have a vision for and lead with Goal #3, whereas the CF team members have focused much more on Goals #1 and #2. An emphasis on Goal #3, “Anchoring the Hartford Foundation in each town” is related to subgoals held by Leadership on supporting community philanthropy and building more connections between the community and the Foundation. As one Leadership team member put it: “One [of the goals] is to inspire philanthropy, period. Beyond the money, it’s to get towns to see the value of coming together, taking care of their town, donating together, grantmaking together.” An emphasis on anchoring HFPG in all 29 communities has translated to a focus on getting the grantmaking process going, and less focus on shifting culture and practice to achieve Goals #1 and 2. We have observed many discussions within the CF about this tension. As one CF team member put it: “I see the work as not just looking at the impact of grant dollars but also about how people are engaged... an inclusive process may affect more people through the process than through, say a park bench.” The different emphasis on goals may be the result of who the staff are in communication with the most (and perhaps who they feel they are most directly accountable to): the Leadership team is more likely to be in communication with Board members and donors, whereas the CF team is more likely to be in contact with members of the 29 communities, as well as colleagues in the field engaged in similar work.

We have observed that the Feb. 6 meeting marked a subtle shift in how the CF team interpreted their work, particularly with regards to Goal #2. They moved ahead with a new understanding that there would not be a significant budget for technical assistance; that they would be providing assistance to towns directly; and that they needed to focus more on encouraging communities to get grants out the door.

Of course, due to COVID-19, that is not the end of the story! While the impacts of COVID-19 on GTCF implementation are detailed in an earlier section of this report, we will mention here that the effect of the pandemic on technical assistance needs and the ability of HFPG to meet those needs has been nuanced. In many ways, the pandemic turned everyone into the role of “learner,” as we all negotiated uncharted waters together. We observed the CF team taking a “wait and see” approach to understand what was possible for communities to do given the multitude of challenges people were suddenly beset with. We also observed members of the Leadership team indicating that the workplan goals were on pause as everyone grappled with the new reality. One very clear way in which the CF team was able to provide immediate support to communities in switching to virtual spaces was to utilize their GoToMeeting account to set up meetings.

IS THERE EVIDENCE OF RESISTANCE OR BARRIERS TO THIS PROGRAM IN COMMUNITIES? AT WHAT PHASES OF IMPLEMENTATION ARE WE SEEING RESISTANCE OR BARRIERS PLAYING A ROLE?

At the current stage of implementation, which includes the formation of Selection Committees and the appointment of Advisory Committees, the only significant and widespread barrier to the work that we are seeing is the impact of COVID-19 on communities (see **Impact of COVID-19 on GTCF**, above).

While we have not seen any signs of resistance to GTCF, there have been challenges in addition to COVID-19 in some communities. We have found that the speed at which communities have moved forward is highly dependent on the organizing abilities of its Selection Committee.

“I stepped forward early on as the facilitator for our Selection Committee. Because I know HFPG and had worked there, and had been part of HFPG teams doing regional outreach in the past, I knew what this project was all about. I also have facilitated a LOT of meetings and training in my time. This CF job was a lot of work. I say this to be honest and to make sure the HFPG team and consultants know that without someone like me with time on my hands, the process might get bogged down and seem or actually be very disorganized. I do not mean to pat myself on the back at all. But to keep the process going and to do all the organizing in the background between meetings of the Selection Committee, I wondered how people working full time or parenting and working could make this happen. I don’t know the answer; I just wanted to point it out as something to think about.”

Communities that were not able to identify someone to lead the process and keep it moving faced barriers to progress. While the CF team member assigned to a community is able to help to move the process along, the work moves most quickly when someone on the committee has the time to devote to the work and the motivation to continue to do so. At the same time, a committee with a strong, motivated leader can lead to the marginalization of other voices on the committee: see **“How included/empowered are historically marginalized voices in these processes?”** for a further exploration of this tension.

As we describe below in the section **“What happens when the same model of grantmaking and support is applied to 29 different communities,”** in general it is larger communities that have struggled to move this work forward. A theory we will explore going forward is whether larger communities, with many existing opportunities to engage in volunteer work, might have difficulty attracting people with the needed amount of time and energy to support the work.

This model of grantmaking and support, with roughly the same resources given to each community, is an example of a project that is equal but not equitable. To some extent, the CF team is adjusting to this reality, giving more of their time to communities that are having difficulty beginning and sustaining the work. As the GTCF work continues, there may be additional opportunities to provide support to communities that are struggling, through technical assistance and focused opportunities for capacity building.

STORY: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE SAME MODEL OF GRANTMAKING AND SUPPORT IS APPLIED TO 29 DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES?

The HFPG service area comprises 29 communities, including one large city, several smaller cities, and many towns. These communities vary significantly in size, wealth, demographics, and density. The GTCF program can be seen as a controlled experiment: what happens when equal amounts of funding and support are provided to different types of communities? What do the results of this project tell us about what sorts of communities respond well to this funding, and which do not?

When communities are sorted by size, we see that the largest communities (with populations over 35,000) have struggled the most with implementation. West Hartford is an exception; this community moved quickly to form a Selection Committee and even was able to attract some additional funds for their work. But the four other large communities have struggled. The two communities that have not formed Selection Committees, East Hartford and Enfield, are both larger communities. The two other large communities in the region, Hartford and Manchester, have formed Selection Committees, but their progress has been significantly slower than that of other communities.

There is a fair amount of variation in progress among small and mid-sized communities, with no apparent correlation between their size and their progress. Some in each group have moved very quickly, while others have moved more slowly.

We also examined communities by **income level** and by the extent of **racial diversity**. These factors do not seem to correlate with GTCF progress, except for where they overlap with each other and with the size of the community. Specifically, Hartford, Manchester, and East Hartford are all large communities, and have high levels of racial diversity (at least 40% of their populations are people of color) and low income levels (median household income levels of under \$70,000 per year).

If it is true (from our limited data set) that the largest, lowest-income, most racially diverse communities struggle with this process, the opposite does not appear to hold true. Among smaller communities with high income levels and low levels of racial diversity, some have moved quickly and others have moved slowly. The same is true for communities with combinations of high to moderate income levels, small to medium size, and low to moderate levels of racial diversity. There are no clear patterns that emerge based on these indicators. Appendix VI shows a table that summarizes these findings, along with cutpoints for each category.

We hope that this analysis has some utility, but we recognize its limitations:

- The small number of communities becomes an even smaller set for analysis when you stratify the towns by the indicators that we named. If there are only five towns that are similar to each other on all three indicators, this means that we cannot have high confidence in generalizations made about the impact of these characteristics on the GTCF process.
- COVID-19 had disparate impacts on communities, with lower-income people being more substantially impacted by business closures, and people of color being more likely to contract the virus and suffer serious complications. The larger, lower-income, more racially diverse communities

in the HFPG service area were faced with a catastrophe that limited their ability to engage with this project. We have no doubt that in the absence of the virus, these communities would have progressed more quickly.

- Finally, the speed of progress so far reflects the work of Selection Committees only. By design, Selection Committee members will not be participating in the Advisory Committee. If a community moved forward quickly as a result of a highly organized Selection Committee, or struggled because of challenges posed by the Selection Committee members working together, these results will not be replicated once the Advisory Committee begins its work.

HOW INCLUDED/EMPOWERED ARE HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED VOICES IN THESE PROCESSES?

This is another question that needs to be explored in more detail with selected communities. As of right now, we know that Selection Committees are largely white, female, well-educated, and middle-aged or older (see **Do Selection and Advisory committees reflect HFPG's goals for breadth and inclusiveness?**). We also know that the intention is to include more under-represented voices in Advisory Committees, who will in turn seek out community input into grantmaking. Anecdotal reports and early observations suggest that the Advisory Committees are more representative than the Selection Committees.

Some of the Selection Committee members with whom we spoke indicated that they are not sure what they can do to form a racially diverse Advisory Committee, given the predominantly white demographics of their towns. We also heard this in conversations with CF team members. There was a general sense of acceptance that if the community is predominantly white, this is to be expected of the Advisory Committee as well. One member of a committee reported that they had rejected the idea of specific outreach to groups outside of their town's dominant culture, branding this as tokenism. Their committee's approach was to do outreach to as wide a range of townspeople as possible, and make sure to include specific groups without naming them as targets of the outreach. In another community, an initial pass at forming an Advisory Committee did not yield a sufficiently diverse applicant pool, and so rather than reach out in a shallow, tokenistic way, the Selection Committee chose to form an initial Advisory Committee and communicate the expectation that the Advisory Committee will continue to build relationships and expand over time as connections are strengthened within the community.

The inclusion of marginalized voices is another area that could be negatively affected by an emphasis on moving the process forward. As noted above, strong leadership is needed for communities to move through the stages of the GTCF process. However, a strong leader can sometimes lead to the minimization of other voices in the process, with either overt or implied dismissal of alternative viewpoints that could take time to explore. We offer this as a caution to teams as they move forward.

As we connect with communities during Years Two and Three of this initiative, we intend to explore with select communities, not just the demographics of Advisory Committee members, but also:

- The nature of the application process to form the Advisory Committee, including any screening processes that were used to select Advisory Committee members,
- Ways in which Advisory committees make an effort to welcome and include all members' voices, including those that are new to working in town-level committees, as well as ways in which some voices are minimized, and

- Whether the voices of other historically marginalized populations, outside of the Advisory Committees, are sought out as part of the grantmaking process.

This analysis will be done through observation of meetings, as well as private conversations with Advisory Committee members and other community members who are not participating in GTCF.

STORY: DOG PARK:

What happens when two dogs meet each other for the first time? A lot depends on where the interaction takes place. If the meet-up is in the home territory of one of the dogs, it is likely that the “home” dog will be aggressive, and the “visiting” dog will be passive and quiet. But if they meet in a neutral space, such as a dog park to which they have had similar levels of exposure, their interactions will not be affected by the home-visiting dynamic. They will each be comfortable being themselves, and find a balanced way to be together.

Communities can learn from these doggie dynamics. When inviting people to be part of a process, there needs to be attention to where the process is happening. Is it in a location where historically marginalized people can feel comfortable? Is it a place where they have spent time in the past, on equal footing with other community members? Do they see welcoming images that reflect their culture? Or is it a place that reflects the power structure that is responsible for their marginalization?

As communities re-open and begin to hold meetings in physical locations, it will be important to consider where these meetings are held and what message the location sends to participants.

WHAT SUPPORTS ARE NEEDED BY COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES AS THEY 1) ESTABLISH AND SUSTAIN INCLUSIVE OUTREACH; 2) IDENTIFY NEEDS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND 3) ESTABLISH GRANTMAKING PROCESSES?

SOURCES

Meetings between the CF team and the CES evaluation team

Internal CES team meetings

Interviews with CF team members

Interviews with HFPG Leadership

Conversations with communities that have finished their Selection Committee process

WHAT CAPACITIES DOES HFPG WANT TO SEE IN COMMUNITIES AS THEY UNDERTAKE THIS WORK?

In conversations with the CF team, we have heard that they hope communities grow their capacity to meet the central goals of the GTCF program; more specifically, we have heard that the CF team hopes that communities develop an understanding of:

- Inclusion as it relates to the outreach and engagement phase of establishing an Advisory Committee
- Technical skills, such as taking meeting notes, organizing virtual meetings, developing communications materials
- All aspects of the grantmaking process, with an emphasis on participatory approaches

While we do not yet have enough data to draw conclusions about what the “magic ingredients” are for a successful initiative, it’s important to note the iterative process that has been at play between HFPG and the communities. The CF team started out

with ideas about what community capacity was needed, but as they learned from communities engaged in the process, that understanding has shifted and changed (a good example of this is how the Toolkit has seen several iterations based on the co-learning process at play). HFPG, in turn, is growing their own capacity and skill in response to community strengths and needs (see **The Evolving Nature of Capacity-Building Support**).

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM OTHER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES ABOUT NEEDED SUPPORTS? WHAT HAVE HFPG, CONSULTANTS, OR CES IDENTIFIED AS NEEDS FOR MORE SUPPORT?

The CF team has been asking this question since the inception of the project, and as part of the program design process, they conducted their own research about best practices, particularly within the field of philanthropy. They also learned about community engagement processes that have happened in the region (for example, Hartford Decides, a participatory budgeting process). Other organizations engaged in similarly broad and bold community engagement efforts shared with the CF team early on that the initiative would likely take more time and more staff than they planned for.

As part of their learning process, the CF team asked the CES team to do a resource/literature review to unearth additional best practices, evidence of success, models, and other assets that they could use to build their own capacity, as well as for use within the Toolkit (an appendix to the May 2020 memo included a resource review conducted by the CES team). The CF team shared with us that the communities were most interested in assets that were concrete “how-to’s,” templates and short guides, that could be organized in a way that would be easy to access and pull out when needed. One challenge that we faced during the resource review was finding short and succinct resources, geared towards lay leaders, appropriate for the 29 community context, that would guide them through establishing an inclusive grantmaking process. Although these resources have been helpful

in laying the groundwork for the Toolkit, our impression is that the CF team has had to develop their own set of unique tools and templates adapted for the GTCF program and communities, and that they have tweaked and adjusted these resources based on immediate feedback from communities, particularly those who have had quicker implementation processes.

WHAT ARE EXISTING STRENGTHS AND ASSETS IN COMMUNITIES? HOW DO THESE VARY AND GROW?

An initial discussion based on available data of the strengths and assets within communities can be found in the section on **What evidence is there of capacity-building within communities as they meet this challenge?**

WHAT TYPES OF SUPPORTS ARE PROVIDED IN THE TOOLKITS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM HFPG?

A document drafted in August 2019 and posted on the HFPG website details the complete list of ways that the Foundation is available to provide support to communities. These include:

- A Hartford Foundation staff member, part of the Community Funds Team, serving as a Community Funds Liaison for each town
- Meeting attendance and facilitation from the liaison
- Group training on inclusion, participatory processes, meeting facilitation, and other topics as needed
- Three Toolkits with information and templates to assist town residents in utilizing their community funds. These Toolkits include:
 - General Community Fund Toolkit – Establishing Your Town’s Community Fund
 - Selection Committee Toolkit – Selecting Your Town’s First Community Funds Advisory Committee
 - Advisory Committee Toolkit – Establishing and Running a Participatory Grantmaking Process
- Contact information for interested people in each community, as it is shared with HFPG through its website
- A website and town landing page for each town, linked to the HFPG website, with information about the Community Funds program as well as town-specific information
- On-going support, guidance and assistance as needed

We have observed the CF team providing support in all of these ways, with the exception of the third bullet, “Group training on inclusion, participatory processes, meeting facilitation, and other topics as needed.” Group training has not been offered nor organized to our knowledge. The Toolkit is the primary way in which the CF team has responded to the collective needs of the communities, and it has undergone several iterations in response to community need.

The version of the Toolkit that is posted on the HFPG website has two parts: Participant Toolkit and Selection Committee Toolkit. The CF team has also drafted a 6-Unit Toolkit called the “Activation Model” for Advisory Committees that is currently being tweaked in response to committee feedback. It includes basic information about the program, sample templates that groups can use, and guidance for groups on topics such as facilitation, decision-making, and the grantmaking process. It is too early to provide data on broader community response and use of the Toolkit for this report, but we know that CF team members are actively working with towns to apply the Toolkit and responding to community feedback as they move through the Advisory Committee roll-out phase.

As has been mentioned in several other sections, technical assistance from HFPG has been offered by HFPG staff and CF team members, and has taken place at the one-on-one or group level, or on an as-needed, ad hoc basis.

HOW AND TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THE TOOLKITS, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND OTHER RESOURCES HELPFUL TO COMMUNITIES IN THESE PROCESSES?

We look forward to collecting more data at the community level and addressing this question in a future report.

HOW WILL THE FOUNDATION AND COMMUNITIES ADDRESS THE INHERENT POWER IMBALANCES BETWEEN FUNDER AND GRANTEE?

SOURCES

Notes from fall 2019 kick-off meetings

Internal CES team meetings

Interviews with CF team members

Interviews with HFPG Leadership

Interviews with Selection Committees in select towns

Shifting power is at the heart of the Greater Together Community Funds program. The program was conceptualized in recognition that communities are well aware of the needs that they face, and that the Hartford Foundation would be willing to allow communities to select the grant recipients who they felt would best meet these needs. This is an explicit change to the usual model of community foundations, in which communities ask for funding and the foundation determines which requests are worthy of funding. This model shifts grantmaking power to the communities themselves.

We recognize, however, that even with the best of intentions, there will always be a power imbalance between a foundation and the communities it supports. We think it is important that HFPG and CES work together to acknowledge this imbalance, identify how it is playing out, and attempt to address it.

HOW DOES THE CF TEAM WORK WITH RESISTANCE?

We are not able to provide a specific response to this question, because we are unaware of any active resistance to the implementation of GTCF at the community level. We have observed the CF team's response to difficulties, such as communities needing support to initiate the project and then to restart after the COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, and these are described elsewhere in the report.

This evaluation question will become more significant as the communities begin to develop Advisory Committees and make grantmaking decisions. It is possible, although by no means assured, that these decisions will cause conflicts in some communities and potentially with the CF team as well. As the CES team attends Advisory Committee meetings and talks with people in selected communities, we will be attentive to this possibility.

WHAT TOOLS AND STRATEGIES DOES THE HF DEVELOP TO "SHIFT POWER?" WHAT MORE IS NEEDED TO DO THIS WELL?

At the beginning of GTCF, the CF team introduced the project to the communities through kick-off meetings, previously described in the report. The CF team worked to address power imbalances even as far back as these meetings. The team was very intentional about how the meeting was run and how they shared roles and responsibilities among themselves, modeling for the community how inclusion works in practice. There was also ample room for communities to converse with the CF team during these meetings, with two group question-and-answer sessions and small group sessions in which CF team members facilitated.

Questions posed at these meetings were sometimes challenging, but the CF team didn't dismiss these questions or give vague responses. Rather, they acknowledged that there were areas that they hadn't considered, other areas that they recognize and acknowledge might be messy and challenging, and areas where they were open to change based on community feedback. This presentation of the work as a two-way street and a work in progress was an initial foray into power sharing.

The communities then moved into the process of appointing Selection Committees, and the Selection Committees began the work of appointing Advisory Committees. The CF team was present at most of the meetings throughout this process, and the power shifting continued, as these communities – and not the CF team – selected Advisory Committee members. Conversations with CF team members revealed that they were very aware of the need to allow communities to own the process, and that they were continually considering when it was appropriate to step in and when they needed to step back and allow the teams to make decisions. The few Selection Committees with which we spoke noted that the CF team members did a good job of allowing them to lead the process, providing feedback only in limited circumstances and usually after being asked.

“I liked that the HFPG staff planned some strategies as we went along. Normally when I work with folks the plans/rules are already in place.”

The Toolkit, in some ways, also reflects a shared power approach, as the elements of it were adjusted based on input from the communities, and while they were encouraged to use it, funding was not contingent upon use of the Toolkit. This exemplifies the way in which HFPG has worked with communities – rather than give them requirements or mandates, which would be a “power-over” approach, they have sought to position themselves as a resource and partner to communities; building trust, being flexible and responsive, and being open to learning from communities characterizes their approach to every aspect of the work.

This decision to let the communities (mostly) lead the process does bring forward a tension that was raised earlier in the report – between allowing communities control of their process, and ensuring that the values that HFPG is promoting through GTCF are honored. There are no specific examples of which we are aware of communities attempting to implement GTCF in a way that goes against HFPG’s clearly-communicated principle of inclusion. However, as GTCF implementation continues, with Advisory Committees potentially continuing to meet for years to come, this may become an issue.

RECOMMENDATION: We suggest regular check-ins among the CF team about how the tension between community control of the process and implementation that is consistent with HFPG expectations is playing out in communities, and how the issue can be addressed in a consistent and thoughtful way.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider incorporating a definition of inclusion that specifically addresses the power imbalances that are bound to be present when diverse groups come together to make decisions. We suggest naming power, offering training on how power can impact group dynamics, and how to ensure that there is not just equal representation in the CF program, but equal voice and decision-making power.

HOW DO COMMUNITY GROUPS BALANCE LOOKING TO HFPG FOR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE AND SELF-DEFINING THE PROCESS?

HOW DO COMMUNITY GROUPS PERCEIVE HFPG?

HOW DO COMMUNITY GROUPS VIEW HFPG’S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION?

We have limited data from which to answer these questions, and for that reason we are grouping them together to address jointly. Among the members of the eight Selection Committees that have provided feedback on their

process to CES, most indicated that they are very pleased with the support that the CF team has provided them. As noted above, they recognized that the CF team was allowing them to lead the process and providing support in ways that were not heavy-handed.

These Selection Committee members were very positive overall about the support they received from the CF team member. There was variation in the way they perceive HFPG overall. No one had a negative impression of HFPG, but some were very familiar with the work that HFPG does (three Selection Committee members who provided feedback had previously worked there), while a few still had limited to no understanding, even after participating in a Selection Committee. One person believed that it was the charitable arm of The Hartford, a financial services group. However, several committee members noted that their understanding of HFPG and its goals had grown over the project. One member noted that she was very impressed that Jay Williams, the HFPG CEO, attended and spoke at the kick-off meeting for her community – she believed that this demonstrated strong institutional support for GTCF.

An example of how HFPG has become more anchored in these communities was provided by a CF team member, when she noted that when the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect the area, the Selection Committee with which she was working asked if HFPG would be able to provide support. In fact, HFPG moved quickly to create funding streams for pandemic relief, and saw applications for this relief from many communities that were outside of their usual connections. While there is no definitive evidence that the GTCF process led to these applications coming in, it is reasonable to assume that there is a connection.

Selection Committee members also reflected on HFPG's intentional focus on inclusion, and how this played out in their work. The feedback that we heard about this varied. Early on, the CF team shared with us that they were intentionally not using the word “diversity” to describe their goals for the GTCF program. Their concern was that communities would immediately think of racial and ethnic diversity when they heard this word, and that this would be frustrating and potentially off-putting in towns that have minimal racial and ethnic diversity.

However, some of the communities reported to us that their efforts at inclusion were difficult because of the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in their towns. They used the word “diversity” even though HFPG made an effort to not use this word, which indicates that they see the words “diversity” and “inclusion” as intertwined. We perceived some frustration with HFPG's emphasis on inclusion, and the feeling that it did not work well with their town's demographics – just as the CF team had feared when they decided not to use the word “diversity.”

A recurring theme that we heard was that inclusion for these Selection Committees' processes meant reaching out to as many groups as possible, and then accepting “the best” of what resulted from that outreach. We heard from several Selection Committee members the attitude that “you can't select people who don't want to be part of this,” indicating that they saw it as their responsibility only to get the word out and not to think about how to make the opportunity appealing to different communities. “You can only put it out there and hope their civic duty kicks in,” said one Selection Committee member.

“I could have asked the couple of Black people that I know, but that's tokenism. Instead, we put flyers EVERYWHERE we could think of in the hopes that different groups would join.”

We will further explore the details of how towns operationalize inclusion in their work in a later report, when we have talked with additional Selection Committee members.

HOW DOES THE EVALUATION TEAM PARTNER IN BUILDING SHARED POWER WITH COMMUNITY AND FOUNDATION STAKEHOLDERS?

SOURCES

Meetings between the CF team and the CES evaluation team

Internal CES team meetings

Interviews with CF team members

As the evaluation team for the GTCF program, we see ourselves as being a component of its implementation, and not just external observers who report back to the CF team. We recognize that our reflections and observations, particularly because they are delivered to the CF team throughout the evaluation and not only at the end, have become part of the implementation process.

As part of the GTCF program, we see ourselves as partners in supporting the process of sharing power. Many of our internal conversations as well as conversations with the CF team have included discussions about the tensions and issues involved with shifting power to the community. We have used different resources,

internally as well as with the CF team, to guide these conversations, including team-building exercises, stories, and personal reflections.

Our one-on-one conversations, held monthly between individual members of the CF team and the evaluation team, have also been opportunities to reflect on building shared power. While these conversations are primarily about individual town progress, they also offer the chance for more general reflection. CF team members have indicated that they appreciate the opportunity to discuss town progress in a systematic way, and to recognize common themes across towns.

The CES team has also been part of some difficult conversations with the CF team. We have already referenced a meeting in February of 2020, during which the CF team met with several members of HFPG Leadership to discuss changes in expectations and the budget for the GTCF program, and CES was included in the conversation. While the discussion ended on a positive note and with some concrete plans for moving forward that were acceptable to all involved, there first needed to be a clearing of the air around some strong feelings that the CF team was experiencing about these changes. During the meeting, the CF team expressed their dismay at what appeared to be a dismissal of their previous workplan and top-down implementation of a new one along with a reduced budget by HFPG Leadership. The CES team participated in the discussion, reflecting some of the emotions that were in the room, sharing their understanding of the project's goals, and contributing to the conversation about what support would be needed to bring the work forward.

Another conversation, which was challenging in a different way, took place in early June of 2020. The CF team and the CES team reflected together on the murder of Mr. George Floyd, a Black man, by a police officer, other recent (as well as historic) instances of police brutality and racialized oppression, and how people across the country were responding to these events. A social justice and equity specialist on the CES team facilitated the conversation. Members of both teams trusted each other enough to talk openly and honestly with each

other about very deep-rooted feelings around these events. The two teams shared observations and questions about the Foundation's leadership with regards to racial equity, and the opportunities for fostering deeper understanding within CF communities.

We at CES are not yet at the stage where we are having conversations with the community about sharing our own power with them. However, our plan is to develop a participatory evaluation process that will involve Advisory Committees in developing evaluation questions and determining the best way to answer and report on them. This work will form the backbone of our evaluation in Years Two and Three of the GTCF evaluation.

CONCLUSION

The Hartford Foundation's GTCF program is off to a strong start in its first year of implementation.

- The Hartford Foundation has an internal team providing a high level of support to communities as they undertake this work. This includes a strong connection between each town and a CF team liaison, Toolkits with materials that support moving the work forward, and technical assistance on an as-needed basis.
- The CF team is continually engaged in reflection work around issues of inclusion, community engagement, and anchoring the foundation in communities, and is moving forward to support these goals.
- The CF team is modeling and demonstrating the shifting of power from themselves as the funder, to the community teams.
- Communities are engaged with the work and are moving forward with forming Advisory Committees that will oversee the grantmaking decision process.

We look forward to continuing to work with HFPG as communities move forward into the second year of implementation. We anticipate increasing our direct connections with community teams in order to develop a greater understanding of how communities view and are engaging with this work. We will also use participatory processes to include communities in the evaluation going forward.

APPENDIX I: SOURCES

This report draws from a variety of sources:

Meetings between the CF team and the CES evaluation team: Between July 2019 and the end of June 2020, the CF team and CES team met 16 times to discuss the GTCF evaluation. Before mid-March 2020, most of these meetings were in person at the HFPG headquarters, but two were held by telephone. From March through June, the meetings were held using Zoom or GoToMeeting teleconferencing.

Internal CES team meetings: The CES team meets weekly to reflect on recent work and plan work going forward. These meetings always hold time for conversations about what we are learning from the work as we gather information about the GTCF implementation. They also provide an opportunity for us to center ourselves in the work, and consider how the lens we are bringing to the work is helpful for HFPG and for the communities.

Notes from fall kick-off meetings: In September, October, and November of 2019, HFPG hosted eight regional kick-off meetings to introduce the GTCF initiative. CES representatives attended all eight of these meetings and observed how CF team members described the GTCF initiatives, the reactions and questions from community members, and the small-group interactions that took between attendees from individual communities and CF team members.

A follow-up survey after the kick-off meetings: CES sent electronic surveys to all kick-off meeting attendees, asking the following questions:

- Which convening did you attend?
- What did you learn at the meeting?
- Is there anything you want the Hartford Foundation to know?

There were 380 meeting attendees, and the survey was completed by 219 respondents (58%).

Telephone conversations or Zoom meetings that paired CF team members with CES evaluation team members: Individual CF team members were paired with CES team members on monthly telephone calls, beginning in November or December of 2019. These calls, which usually lasted 60-90 minutes, would consist of an overview of the progress of the individual towns that each team member was supporting, along with a more general discussion of progress overall. This was also sometimes an opportunity to provide general project updates to CES. These conversations were summarized by the CES team member, using Survey Gizmo to capture individual community progress as well as key themes.

Interviews with HFPG leadership: In April of 2020, CES team members conducted interviews with the following members of HFPG leadership:

- Jay Williams, President
- Elysa Gordon, Vice President and Senior Advisor
- Brad Drazen, Vice President of Communications

- Deborah Rothstein, Vice President of Development
- Judy Rozie-Battle, former Senior Vice President for Community Investments (this interview was conducted in December 2019, just after Judy retired from HFPG)
- Chris Senecal, Senior Public Policy and Community Relations Officer

We also had a joint conversation with Tom Zeleznock, Senior Communications Officer, and Michaela Mendygral, Communications Assistant, concerning the support that the Communications department was providing to the GTCF project.

A Google sheet called **Town-Level Data Collection**, in which CF team members recorded information about each meeting in each community, including community name, community status (developing a Selection Committee, Selection Committee in progress, Advisory Committee in progress), date of meeting, and other significant details. This, along with the monthly telephone calls described above, was the primary mechanism by which CF team members kept CES informed about community progress.

A **survey of Selection Committee members**, asking for demographic information. This survey will also be sent to Advisory Committee members once these committees are underway. As of this writing, in mid July, 183 Selection Committee members in 23 communities had received surveys (four additional communities had just received notification that the surveys would be coming, and two communities had not yet formed Selection Committees). There have been 122 responses, for a response rate of 67%.

Conversations with communities that have finished their Selection Committee process, to reflect upon the process and provide feedback to HFPG. Communities interviewed as of July 2020 include:

- Glastonbury
- Hebron
- Newington
- Tolland
- West Hartford
- Wethersfield

In addition, Selection Committee members in Bloomfield and East Windsor completed Selection Committee reflection questionnaires independently and submitted them to CES.

APPENDIX II: JOURNEY TOWARDS INCLUSION



APPENDIX III: PROTOCOL FOR NOTE CARD EXERCISE

IDENTITY NOTE CARD EXERCISE - HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF?

Purpose:

- Get a broad overview of who is attending regional meetings
- Get a sense of what identities are important to participants, to potentially use in future data collection
- Engage participants in thinking about how identity can be defined

Timing (for the Regional Kick-off Meetings):

- At end of large group discussion, continuing into small groups

Script:

We'd like to take a few minutes to ask you about how you identify yourself. This isn't a set of checkboxes, but an open-ended question - what identities are important to you?

- Another way of thinking about identity is the type of "hat" that you wear. What "hats" are you wearing?
- Another way of asking it is "How do you see yourself? What aspects of yourself are important to you?"

Here are some examples that we came up with for ourselves (show slide, note types of categories used - leave slide projected for the remainder of the exercise).

There are some blank index cards on your table, along with some pens. Take a few minutes and write down what comes to mind when you think about your identity - aim for 3-5 key words. Don't include your name, but please do note the town you're representing.

We won't ask you to share these out loud with anyone, but we will collect them, because we're interested in knowing how people in this room see themselves. Because inclusion and representation are important to this process, we want to know who is represented from your community. It helps inform our work going forward.

Let's take about five minutes to do this. When you're done, please put your note card into (box? envelope?) and then (instructions here about separating by town into different areas).

In town-level settings:

Let's take a couple of minutes to reflect on the identity exercise that we just did. There's no need to tell people what you wrote. But do you want to tell us anything about how it made you feel? Was it easy for you to come up with a few words, or did you struggle? Did it raise any issues that you feel comfortable sharing with us?

(Allow a few moments of silence and see where it goes)

Notes: This conversation might yield a lot of useful info, or people may not be willing to engage with it at all, or maybe somewhere in between. This will likely vary a lot between groups and in different settings. We don't see it as necessary to push people to have this conversation or to record a lot of information about how they respond. But it can be the beginning of getting people comfortable with talking about issues of identity, and can help flag areas of discomfort that should be noted and potentially addressed.

APPENDIX IV: DIMENSIONS OF SUCCESS

Results (“marching orders”)

Process (how we will elicit the result)

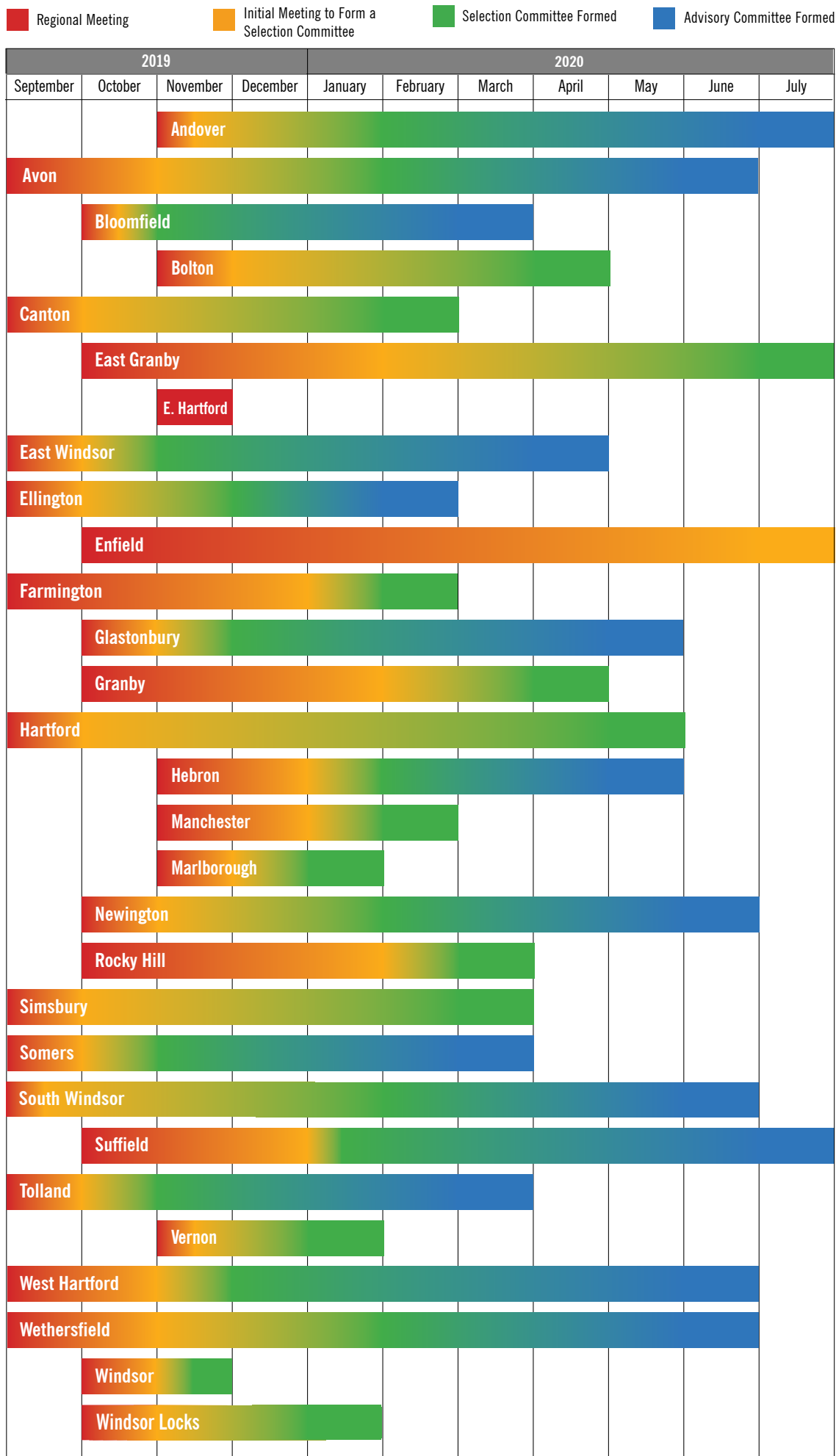
Relationships (how people will relate to one another during the process)



Image description: The image shows an equilateral triangle with the words “Shared Responsibility for Success” in the middle with arrows going from the middle to each of the corners. Outside of the triangle, at each corner, is listed an aspect of success which mirrors the three categories as described above (Results, Process, Relationship)

From the Interaction Institute for Social Change

Appendix V: Town Progress Over Time



APPENDIX VI: SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY STATUS BY COMMUNITY TYPE

Communities Sorted by Size

Small = Under 15,000

Medium = 15,000 - 35,000

Large = Over 35,000

Town	Size	% White	Income	Status
Andover	Small	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
East Windsor	Small	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Hebron	Small	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Somers	Small	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Bolton	Small	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Canton	Small	Over 85%	Middle	Selection committee formed
East Granby	Small	Over 85%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Granby	Small	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Marlborough	Small	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Windsor Locks	Small	70-84%	Low	Selection committee formed
Avon	Medium	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Bloomfield	Medium	Under 60%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Ellington	Medium	Over 85%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Glastonbury	Medium	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Newington	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
South Windsor	Medium	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Suffield	Medium	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Tolland	Medium	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Wethersfield	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Farmington	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Rocky Hill	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Simsbury	Medium	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Vernon	Medium	70-84%	Low	Selection committee formed
Windsor	Medium	Under 60%	Middle	Selection committee formed
West Hartford	Large	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Enfield	Large	70-84%	Middle	Developing a selection committee
East Hartford	Large	Under 60%	Low	No activity
Hartford	Large	Under 60%	Low	Selection committee formed
Manchester	Large	Under 60%	Low	Selection committee formed

Communities Sorted by Income Level

Low = Median HH income of under \$70,000/year

Middle = MHHI of \$70,000 to \$100,000/year

High = MHHI of over \$100,000/year

Town	Size	% White	Income	Status
East Hartford	Large	Under 60%	Low	No activity
Windsor Locks	Small	70-84%	Low	Selection committee formed
Vernon	Medium	70-84%	Low	Selection committee formed
Hartford	Large	Under 60%	Low	Selection committee formed
Manchester	Large	Under 60%	Low	Selection committee formed
East Windsor	Small	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Bloomfield	Medium	Under 60%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Ellington	Medium	Over 85%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Newington	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Wethersfield	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
West Hartford	Large	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Enfield	Large	70-84%	Middle	Developing a selection committee
Canton	Small	Over 85%	Middle	Selection committee formed
East Granby	Small	Over 85%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Farmington	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Rocky Hill	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Windsor	Medium	Under 60%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Andover	Small	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Hebron	Small	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Somers	Small	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Avon	Medium	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Glastonbury	Medium	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
South Windsor	Medium	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Suffield	Medium	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Tolland	Medium	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Bolton	Small	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Granby	Small	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Marlborough	Small	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Simsbury	Medium	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed

Communities sorted by racial/ethnic diversity

Town	Size	% White	Income	Status
Bloomfield	Medium	Under 60%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
East Hartford	Large	Under 60%	Low	No activity
Hartford	Large	Under 60%	Low	Selection committee formed
Manchester	Large	Under 60%	Low	Selection committee formed
Windsor	Medium	Under 60%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Somers	Small	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Avon	Medium	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
South Windsor	Medium	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
Suffield	Medium	70-84%	High	Advisory committee formed
East Windsor	Small	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Newington	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Wethersfield	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
West Hartford	Large	70-84%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Enfield	Large	70-84%	Middle	Developing a selection committee
Windsor Locks	Small	70-84%	Low	Selection committee formed
Vernon	Medium	70-84%	Low	Selection committee formed
Farmington	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Rocky Hill	Medium	70-84%	Middle	Selection committee formed
Andover	Small	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Hebron	Small	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Glastonbury	Medium	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Tolland	Medium	Over 85%	High	Advisory committee formed
Ellington	Medium	Over 85%	Middle	Advisory committee formed
Bolton	Small	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Granby	Small	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Marlborough	Small	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Simsbury	Medium	Over 85%	High	Selection committee formed
Canton	Small	Over 85%	Middle	Selection committee formed
East Granby	Small	Over 85%	Middle	Selection committee formed