

Phase 1 Case Study: Campaign

Community Solutions: Northeast Hartford Partnership

In Connecticut, the Northeast Hartford Partnership (NHP) got its start in 2010, when its parent organization, Community Solutions, a national non-profit focused on addressing the root causes of poverty, was gifted and invited to transform an abandoned factory in Northeast Hartford into a center for community wellness, safety, and economic prosperity. The neighborhood of nearly 11,000 people surrounding the defunct M. Swift & Sons gold leaf factory is one of the poorest in Connecticut—residents' average life expectancy is 10 years less than in neighboring communities and 40% of residents live in poverty.

Community Solutions, in the form of NHP, views itself as a backbone organization whose role is to coordinate, integrate, and align local efforts to help address this issue. NHP Director Gina Federico Muslim sees herself as a catalyst who helps to build relationships with everyone from the staff and clients of the smallest neighborhood non-profit to those who run St. Francis Hospital, Cigna Foundation, and the state Medicaid agency—all of whom need to be at the table. Muslim says the transformed Swift factory will serve as a community hub and will represent the best and most effective partners at work supporting residents.

NHP currently is in Phase 1—the Campaign Phase—on ReThink Health's *Pathway for Transforming Regional Health*. Phase 1 efforts typically address a specific issue or project—in this case transforming the Swift factory—that requires leaders from diverse organizations across a community to work together. NHP also is working hard to shift into Phase 1 by bringing together a wide variety of stakeholders to coordinate their efforts around a neighborhood sustainability plan, based on the findings of a community needs assessment, and leveraging the area's federal Promise Zone designation. Phase 1 efforts focus on building a collaborative team with well-positioned leaders from key organizations that affect the community's health. Because of this, group composition often expands from a Phase 1 to Phase 1 effort.

"I see the work we're doing to transform the Swift factory as one physical example of the work we're doing to transform the community," said NHP's Muslim.

Establishing a Stewardship Group

As a backbone organization, NHP is bringing together neighbors, businesses, public and private nonprofits, and government agencies around issues that affect everyone in the neighborhood. The



factory is being transformed into a community hub where partners can work together and see the results of their partnership. The core components of the factory renovation will include a community food center, a health delivery space that will include mental health and wrap-around services provided by community health workers from the neighborhood, and a potential public library branch that will focus on job training and placement and support resident-led problem solving.

So far, NHP's efforts are paying off. A nine-month care coordination project, for example, resulted in a dramatic reduction in emergency room usage among participants (down from average of nine visits per resident to four), which, in turn, resulted in a 57% reduction in costs.

Tackling Pitfalls

New campaigns focused on addressing a particular community problem are exciting and hold tremendous potential. But, while they bring together individuals and organizations that have not worked together before, they also can feel temporary—new partners come together to achieve a specific goal and often disband once the goal is met. The time-limited nature of campaign-style projects is a common pitfall in Phase 1 that makes it difficult to advance to Phase 1I.

A closely related pitfall is that, once the campaign goal is met, participants may be looking forward to moving on to something else—they are satisfied with a job well done and assume that the community will be returning to the old way of doing things, which required less consensus and collaboration and afforded them and their organizations more autonomy.

NHP is working to avoid these and other pitfalls by developing itself into a stewardship group that inspires project leaders to see beyond their specific efforts to how those efforts align with a broader, long-term vision for the community. When asked about NHP's role in the community, Muslim said: "When we first got here, there were a lot of folks focused on important objectives, but they weren't really talking to each other. We realized that a role that Community Solutions and the Northeast Hartford Partnership could play is bringing these folks together, not only for conversation but finding ways to align. The sum of our parts is more effective working together than any of us can do working side by side."

Building Momentum

Along the *Pathway*, strategies that help stewardship groups manage or avoid common pitfalls so that they may continue progressing toward the next phase are called momentum builders. In Hartford, the NHP is building momentum in several important ways.

- ***NHP and community stakeholders collaboratively conducted a common needs assessment.*** NHP is using the factory transformation and other neighborhood projects as a jumping off point for a much bolder aspiration—to develop and implement, over the long term, a collective vision for a healthier, more prosperous community. To begin laying the groundwork for that vision, NHP, in partnership with the Cigna Foundation, a neighbor and major health insurer in Hartford, developed a health risk assessment (HRA)-style community survey (called



Pulse Northeast) to take the pulse of the neighborhood. Conducted by neighborhood residents, the survey takes stock of the health, social, and economic qualities of the neighborhood. It provides an opportunity for residents to explain to their neighbors the work that NHP is doing and how community members can contribute, as well as providing employment to those conducting the surveys.

- ***NHP has brought together a team of multi-sector champions who are beginning to think about broad systems change.*** Community Solutions and NHP are laying a foundation and settling in for the long term. They are developing relationships with and partnering with a group of “systems champions”—a diverse group of local leaders who are willing to work hard toward systems change. The recent Promise Zone designation has accelerated these efforts and brought NHP into contact with other leaders, including the Mayor’s Office, who are also working to improve the community.

In addition to working together on the Pulse Northeast assessment, Community Solutions and Cigna proposed a partnership with the State of Connecticut that complements and supports the Connecticut Healthcare Innovation Plan by improving community health; alleviating health disparities; achieving better quality of care and care experience; and improving affordability by reducing healthcare costs. The State agreed to join the partnership and provides it with important insurance claims data that will help NHP identify health needs in the community and track changes over time.

“We’re coordinating efforts across challenges,” said Cigna Foundation’s David Figliuzzi. “Creating a shared vision and getting everyone to pull in the same direction is our greatest challenge, but if we can do that, then we can make progress.”

Looking Ahead

The Northeast Hartford Partnership is always looking ahead. Once Community Solutions realized the needs were much greater than could be appropriately addressed by transforming an old factory into a central resource for the community, it began the process of networking and building relationships with key stakeholders—a process that will continue as it transitions the initial group of leaders into a more formal stewardship group in Phase 1. “We can build a strong framework for true partnership—because people come and go—but a strong framework can be a profound engine for neighborhood change,” said Muslim.

For more information, visit:

<http://cmtysolutions.org/northeastneighborhoodpartnership>

Watch the Phase 1 video about NHP’s work:

<http://www.rethinkhealth.org/resources/phase-i-video-case-study/>

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