



# Evaluating the Funder's Contribution in Place-Based Initiatives



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# Overview

- Intro to Place-Based Philanthropy
- Evaluating Place-Based Initiatives
- Contribution Analysis
- Taxonomy of Foundation Roles
- Example of Evaluating the Foundation's Contribution
  - The Clinton Foundation's Community Health Transformation Initiative

# Impactful Philanthropy

- What is the business of foundations?
  - Making grants, or
  - Generating/stimulating/catalyzing impact
- *We have for many years taken a very broad view and tried to do a little bit everywhere, with success, but we still don't see any significant improvement in the health status of the population we're interested in.*
  - Karen McNeil-Miller, President, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, February 2011
- To achieve impact, a foundation needs to concentrate its investments in a limited number of "places"
  - Issue areas
  - Programmatic approaches
  - Target populations
  - Geographic communities

# Achieving Impact in Specific Places: *Place-based philanthropy*

- Shift in orientation
  - from supporting *individual* organizations, programs, and outcomes
  - to fostering **community-wide changes** in services, systems, capacity, culture, etc. that lead to community-level improvements in a variety of aspects of health and quality of life
- Large, long-term investments in particular communities
  - Communities where the funder has a direct connection or interest
  - Open applications (e.g., RFP)
- Funder supports a complement of mutually reinforcing strategies and programs.

# Approaches to Place-Based Philanthropy

- Comprehensive Community Initiatives (Brown & Garg, 1999)
  - Centralized coordinating bodies (with representation from multiple orgs)
  - Collective planning and strategy development according to a comprehensive frame.
    - The process is often prescribed by funder.
  - Foundation provides resources to plan and implement strategy.
- Cultivation Approach (Easterling & Gesell, 2019)
  - Decentralized – foundation identifies and supports promising efforts throughout the community (including non-obvious actors)
  - In addition to providing funding, the foundation adds value through activation, capacity-building, brokering connections, asking critical questions, and pushing local actors to be more strategic.
  - Requires deep, consistent engagement by foundation staff

# Evaluating Place-Based Initiatives

- Large investment warrants evaluation
- Formative and Summative evaluation are both important
  - Formative
    - What is and isn't happening according to design?
    - What complexities did we fail to take into account?
    - What adjustments are needed – by the foundation, local actors, consultants, etc.?
  - Summative
    - What changed within the community?
    - ***What did the foundation make happen – or help make happen?***
    - What is the Return on Investment (ROI)?
    - What contextual factors influence ROI? (Which communities are best suited for this approach?)

# Challenges to Summative Evaluation

- Place-based initiatives typically focus on big, entrenched issues →
  - Many years before tangible outcomes appear.
- Complex, crowded environment with many actors, concurrent initiatives, and exogenous factors →
  - Difficult to isolate the foundation's effect, let alone assess the effect quantitatively.
- Assessing ROI is challenging, especially in the short run.



# Contribution Analysis

- Foundations are increasingly accepting that they need to be content with assessing **contribution** rather than establishing **attribution**.
- The methodology of **Contribution Analysis** (Mayne, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2009, 2011) offers the potential of assessing the funder's contribution.
- Answers the question, "Is there evidence that the funder's resources and actions contributed to a set of observed outcomes?"
- Plausibility of the intervention's contribution is assessed using systematic inquiry.
  - Is the program's Theory of Change plausible?
  - Are the elements and assumptions within the ToC confirmed by evidence?
  - Was the program implemented according to design?
  - Are there factors outside the program that could account for the observed outcomes?
  - Have the most relevant alternative explanations been disproved?
- This form of CA is applicable in cases where measurable outcomes have actually been observed.



# Contribution Analysis for Place-Based Initiatives

- **Place-based initiatives have extremely long time horizons for impact.**
  - How to evaluate the foundation's contribution in the shorter run -- when community stakeholders are in the process of formulating and implementing their projects and programs?
- The Wake Forest Strategic Philanthropy Research Group developed a form of **Contribution Analysis that assesses how a place-based foundation is contributing when outcomes are still taking shape.**
  - Assesses the foundation's contributions to *evolving lines of work* (i.e., "*projects*").
  - Focuses just as much on the question, "***How** has the foundation contributed?*" as the question, "***Has** the foundation contributed?*"

# Taxonomy of Foundation Roles in Place-Based Initiatives

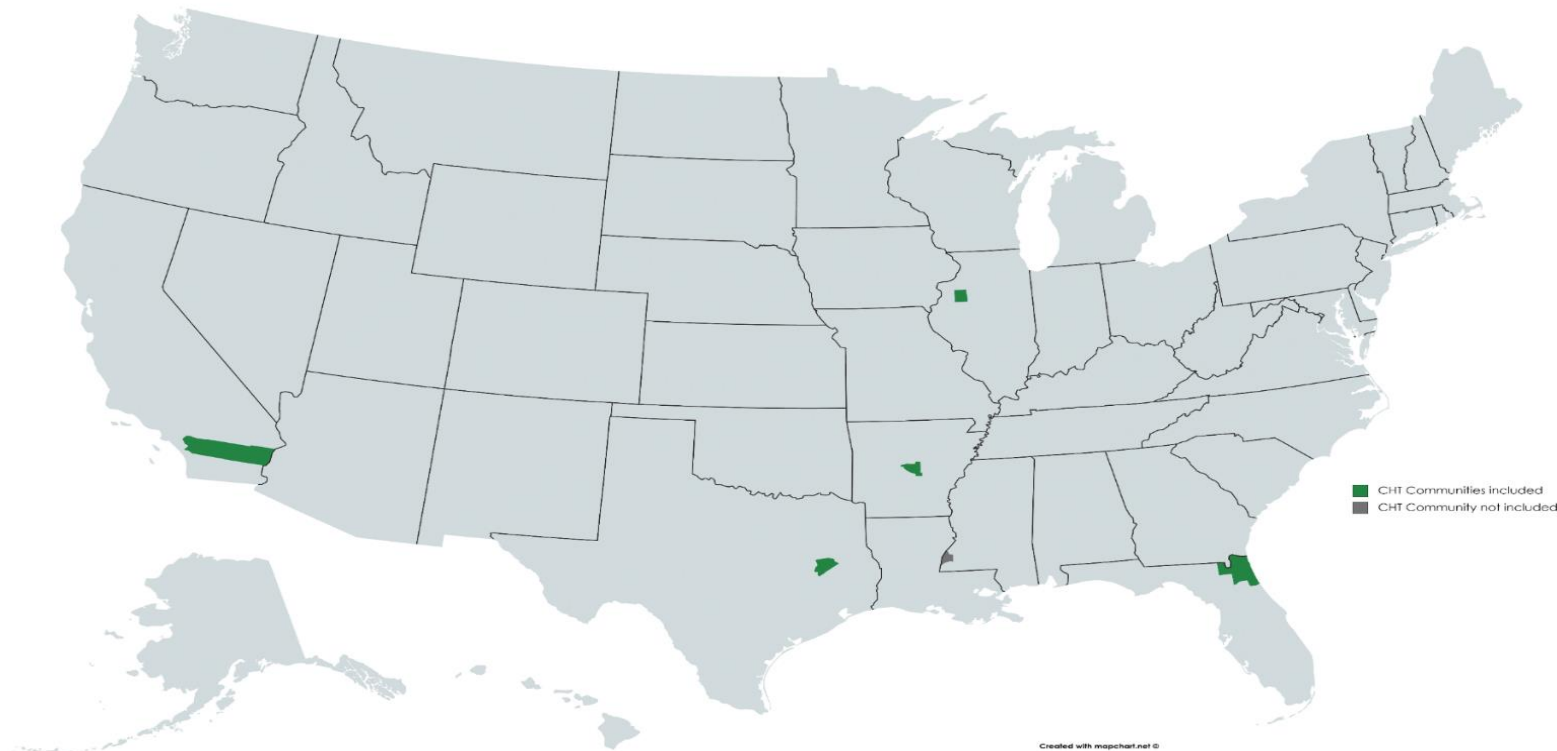
- **Driver:** foundation takes the lead in choosing, designing and developing local projects. Also provides resources that are essential to implement those projects.
- **Facilitator:** foundation creates the conditions to allow local stakeholders to plan, develop and implement projects in line with their interests.
- **Activator:** foundation sparks action that moves forward a new or dormant line of work.
- **Enhancer:** foundation plays a key role in expanding the scale or reach of community-developed projects.
- **Supporter:** foundation brings resources that assist local stakeholders in developing and/or implementing local projects, but doesn't materially influence the design of the project.

# Uses of the Taxonomy

1. Clarify the foundation's place-based strategy and theory of change.
2. Clarify the foundation's more general Theory of Philanthropy.
3. Evaluate the role(s) that the foundation actually played in its place-based initiative.

# *Evaluation Example: Clinton Foundation's Community Health Transformation (CHT) Initiative*

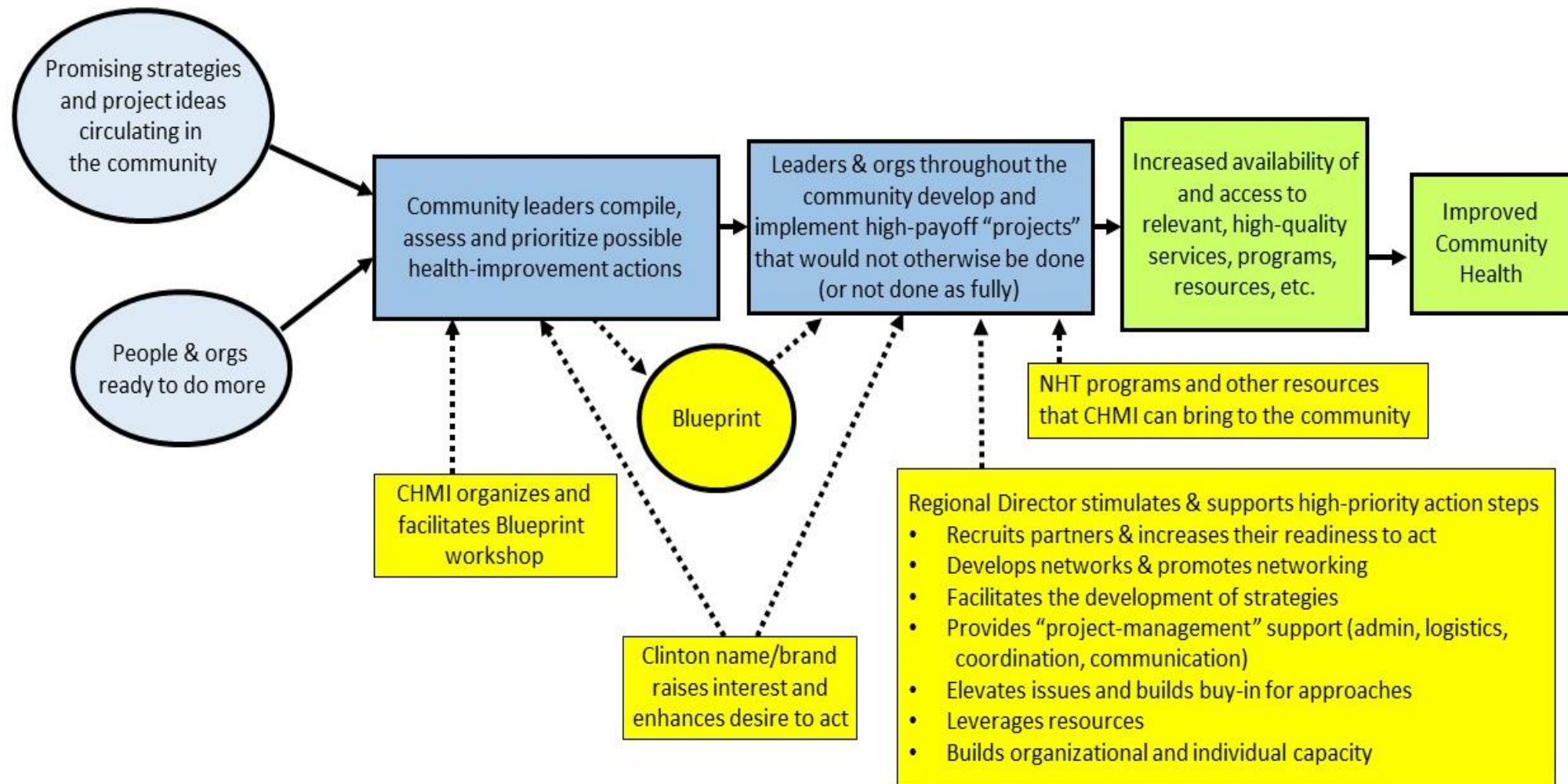
- A program of Clinton Health Matters Initiative (CHMI), the Foundation's arm to improve population health in U.S. communities.
- Cultivation approach to place-based philanthropy.
- Operated in 6 communities between 2012-2019



# Elements of the CHT Model

- A full-time Regional Director
  - Recruited from the community.
  - Employed by the Clinton Foundation for three to five years (depending on the terms of the sponsorship).
  - Responsible for cultivating and advancing lines of work led by community stakeholders.
  - Roles: project manager, research analyst, advisor, coach, broker of relationships, convener, meeting facilitator, and advocate.
- Projects were selected from the CHMI Blueprint
  - Community-specific agenda with up to 45 Bold Action Steps
  - Developed from a one-day planning meeting of community leaders.
  - Planning process organized around the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps model
- Clinton Foundation's name reputation and influence
  - Drew community stakeholders into the CHT process, and built interest in specific projects
  - President Clinton made personal appearances in 3 communities (CHMI Summits).
- Leveraging the Clinton Foundation's other initiatives and partnerships to bring in new resources

# CHT Program Model



# Evaluating the Outcomes of the CHT Process

- *Initial thinking*: Track indicators of population health (e.g., CHRR).
- *Revised thinking*: Focus on the work that CHMI helped move forward.
  - How many projects?
  - What is the significance of these projects?
  - *How much* did CHMI move these projects forward?
  - *How* did CHMI move these projects forward?



# Methods

- Interview each Regional Director to identify “projects” (or lines of work) in their community which they believed had been positively influenced by the CHT process.
- Interview Local Stakeholders directly involved in these projects to gain a deeper understanding of the projects and to obtain an independent assessment of CHMI’s role.
- Review project-specific materials
- Use these data to:
  - Characterize those projects:
    - Stage of development
    - Reach & Dose (*for projects that are delivering benefits*)
    - Specific programs/services vs. Larger forms of Systems Change
  - Verify that the project took shape or changed shape because of CHMI
  - Determine the Role that CHMI played in moving the project forward

# Top-Level Results

- This method was carried out in 5 of the 6 communities
  - Turnover in Regional Director in 6<sup>th</sup> community
- Each Regional Director identified 4 or 5 projects that they believed CHMI had moved forward (total of 24 across 5 sites)
  - Local stakeholders verified that CHMI had played an instrumental role in each project
- Sample projects
  - Enhancements to food distribution systems
  - Physical activity campaigns
  - Expanded substance-misuse services
  - Integrated system to screen for HIV and refer to services
  - Telehealth system to triage 911 calls
  - Volunteer connections
  - Mapping of food deserts
  - Engineering analysis of dangerous intersections
  - Collaboration among foundations to coordinate strategies

# Project Characteristics (n=24)

- Stage of Development
  - 16 projects had reached the point of delivering benefits to local residents
  - 8 involved planning, analysis, mapping, etc.
- Reach and Dose (among 16 projects delivering benefits)
  - 5 were rated as both high reach & high dose
  - 5 more were at least moderate reach & moderate dose
- Systems Change, Collaboration and Networking
  - 6 involved systems change (multiple agencies changed approach, developed new structures, changed policy, etc.)
    - Food systems
    - Substance misuse treatment
    - Behavioral health system of care
    - HIV screening, testing, follow-up and referral
  - 4 additional projects created formal networks or coalitions among agencies

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# Roles Played by the Clinton Foundation in CHT

- **Driver:** CF played a primary role in developing the project and provided resources that were essential to implement the project (**3 projects**)
- **Activator/Facilitator:** CF sparked action that advanced a new or dormant project, or facilitated the planning process that generated the project (**8 projects**)
  - Activator/Facilitator with Ongoing Contribution (**4 projects**)
- **Enhancer:** CF played a key role in expanding the scale or reach of the project (**10 projects**)
- **Supporter:** CF contributed indirectly to the development of the project (**3 projects**)

# More Specific Forms of Contribution that Moved Projects Forward *(tailored to the CHT Program Model)*

- **Increasing readiness for action:** People and organizations are activated to do new work or additional work.
- **Network development:** Networks of people and/or organizations with shared interests become stronger and better able to develop and implement projects, services, programs, etc.
- **Strategy development:** Organizations, workgroups, coalitions and/or networks develop clearer, more informed and more impactful strategies to achieve their goals.
- **Project management:** Administrative, logistical, and analytic support that allows organizations, workgroups, coalitions, and/or networks to move forward with the development and implementation of key projects.
- **Elevating issues and approaches:** Increased visibility, awareness and buy-in for specific approaches across the community as a whole, as well as among key constituents such as policy makers, funders, and community institutions.
- **Leveraging resources:** Projects gain increased access to financial and other resources.
- **Building organizational and individual capacity:** Organizations become more effective in developing and implementing their programs as well as strong in their operations, staffing, finances, governance, etc. Leaders within those organizations also develop their individual capacity.

*Each project was coded as to whether or not CHMI contributed these forms of support. For the vast majority of projects, CHMI contributed in at least 3 distinct ways.*

# Charting CHMI's Contribution as Projects Developed

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