

SUMMARY OF NONPROFIT & COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

SUMMER 2021



SUMMARY

In December 2019, the Foundation for Community Health (FCH) launched a strategic planning process to develop a framework that would guide the foundation's grantmaking strategies, practices, and procedures. In April 2021, the board approved a new strategic framework for the foundation, and three broad strategic priority areas that the foundation would allocate its financial and human resources towards. With this framework and recently drafted initiatives, FCH staff facilitated conversations with nonprofit leaders and community stakeholders to garner feedback on the foundation's direction.

Over the course of three months, staff facilitated conversations with the nonprofit community, including current and longstanding grantees of the foundation, and community stakeholders. Thirty individuals participated in these conversations, from 17 organizations, representing direct service nonprofits, municipalities (town-based and regional), place-based funders, and departments of public health. The following summary details the feedback that we received, the changes that we will make as a result, and the questions we will continue to hold as we set upon this new path.

BRIGHT SPOTS

Overall, the response we received in these conversations was positive, most specifically participants noted:

- Appreciation for the **overall flexibility** of the framework, specifically in how the three priority areas were constructed
- The **emphasis on learning**, as opposed to systems of monitoring and evaluation
- How changes around **streamlining applications and reporting** would reduce burden on organizations applying for funding and in post-award scenarios where budgets or programs change mid-course
- The benefits of unrestricted funding – from **building trusting relationships** to resourcing organizations in a way that allows them to **sustain mission-critical work** or **readily resource new programs** or initiatives
- How changes made to FCH's mission statement were **more inclusive** and articulated more clearly how systems are responsible for disparities, as opposed to individuals or availability of services

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

- How can FCH best measure community level changes, as a result of its investments?
- Given that different organizations have different relationships and levels of trust with the foundation, how can FCH best maintain and build **all** relationships with grantees without being too prescriptive, but also maintaining clarity about expectations?
- How can FCH best balance its role as a convener and thought partner, while continuing to make space, foster, and prioritize solutions developed within the sectors we aim to strengthen?

CHANGES WE'RE MAKING

There were several instances where specific changes were suggested to FCH's funding initiatives. Below, we've outlined each suggestion and how we plan on addressing or integrating this feedback in our future work.

Don't make it a big report

Communicate regularly and right-size the details, make it interactive



We will work to make our communication actionable and right-sized, prioritizing the sharing of more bite-sized information over the development and creation of long reports

Create a culture of learning

Share regularly about what FCH has learned, things that have worked, and what hasn't



We will share more regularly and openly about results and lessons learned

Advocate for those that can't

Nonprofits often cannot participate in advocacy and lobbying efforts – consider building FCH's advocacy and lobbying efforts so that it is in support of the issues impacting the organizations that serve our community



As part of our exploratory process for FCH's advocacy efforts, we will convene a group of grantees to explore this path, its feasibility, and interest within the social sector to have FCH advocate on behalf of their interests

Maintain ongoing support for capacity needs

Capacity is not built from a single project, funding for capacity needs to recognize and honor that



For the first iteration of the Capacity Building Grant Program, we'll remove limits around the # of times organizations can access a particular type of grant

Make space for collaboration

An agenda or workplan is not always conducive and can diminish the organic efforts of collaborative efforts



We will remove specific output and outcome requirements for collaborative and network funding requests

WHAT WE ALSO HEARD

We also heard through questions and comments that it will be critical for FCH to:

- **Be transparent about our decision-making.** From – publishing and widely publicizing clear eligibility criteria and selection criteria for grant opportunities – to sharing information about our solicited grants to the same extent we communicate about responsive grant opportunities.
- **Work so that the changes represented in our new framework are fully integrated in our policies, practices, and procedures.** It is our hope that the changes described within our strategic framework, outlive any individual's role within our organization and become part of the fabric of who FCH is, what it stands for, and how FCH works with others. This is hard work and will require due diligence and deep learning, as well as honest feedback from our partners and community stakeholders.

OUR NEXT STEPS

Our most immediate next steps consist of launching several grant programs, facilitating informational presentations with current and prospective grantees, and developing the foundation's strategies towards advocacy and the ways in which FCH can best support decision-making in our towns. Later this year, we'll create new ways of sharing the foundation's learning and results through our website and other venues and launch an anonymous third-party reviewed grantee survey.