

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

The North Hartford Triple Aim Collaborative, Hartford, Conn.

Funded by Trinity Health, the four-year Transforming Communities Initiative (TCI) supported eight communities to build capacity for — and successfully implement — policy, system, and environmental (PSE) change strategies. Each collaboration — involving a lead community organization with a full-time TCI-funded program director, the local Trinity Health hospital, and other partners — received grant funding and technical assistance and participated in peer learning opportunities. This site profile, prepared by the cross-site evaluation team at the Georgia Health Policy Center in partnership with the local partners, outlines the work and impact supported by TCI between 2016 and 2020.

The Partnership

Founded in 2017 with seed funding from TCI, the North Hartford Triple Aim Collaborative (NHTAC) is a 13-member, place-based collaboration among health-focused city leaders, residents, and organizations to improve well-being in North Hartford. They work together with partners to advance a set of interrelated policy, system, and environment interventions to increase well-being for North Hartford families and create a healthier Hartford. The community-driven collaborative knits together resources to advance a portfolio of initiatives to improve the health and well-being of North Hartford families. The purpose is to achieve greater alignment and collective action among residents, organizations, government, and investors working together to achieve the “Triple Aim” of improved health, well-being, and value of investment in our community. Our specific areas of impact are healthy weight and childhood well-being.

The collaborative focuses on five neighborhoods with a combined population of 47,775. Three of these neighborhoods — Clay Arsenal, Northeast, and Upper Albany — constitute the North Hartford Promise Zone, a federal designation to improve outcomes in high-poverty communities through multisector collaboration. In the North Hartford Promise Zone neighborhoods, the rate of poverty is 49.4%, compared to the city’s rate of 33.9% and the state’s rate of 10%. The additional neighborhoods of Blue Hills and Asylum Hill are included in the NHTAC’s focus area, where Saint Francis Hospital, a Trinity Health hospital, is located.

The backbone support for the collaborative was initially provided by Saint Francis Hospital and to Community Solutions (2016, 2017). In 2018, the collaborative became a sponsored project of the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, and it is part of the Community Investment Department. This move strategically supported the development of a sustainable collaborative, as the United Way is able to both invest in the collaborative as part of its community goals and aggregate funding from partners to support the ongoing work of the group.






North Hartford Triple Aim Collaborative Partners

- Saint Francis Hospital
- United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
- Wellville
- Hartford Health and Human Services Director
- North End Resident Leader
- Connecticut Children’s Medical Center
- University of Connecticut
- Hartford HealthCare
- Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
- Connecticut Health Foundation
- Mayor’s Office
- Hartford Office of Children, Family, Youth and Recreation
- The Village for Families and Children

Approach

Hartford's TCI project, called Well Being 360, was brought on as a site about six months after the original TCI sites were selected. Well Being 360's main focus for the TCI funding was to develop a strong, sustainable collaborative. Hartford's TCI project blended TCI funding with matching local funding from Saint Francis Hospital/Trinity Health of New England and divided program director responsibilities between the health equity program director at Saint Francis Hospital and the NHTAC director. The leadership team also included the City of Hartford Health and Human Services (HHHS) director and the CEO of Wellville, a 10-year, place-based technical assistance initiative to achieve equitable well-being in five communities, including Hartford. This shared leadership structure, blended funding model, and alignment with the Wellville initiative were critical factors in the partnership's success through TCI.

- Hartford's TCI leadership received less TCI grant funding and organized a greater local contribution from Saint Francis Hospital.
- The NHTAC estimates they have leveraged over **\$1 million** in matching funds derived from **60%** in-kind and **40%** cash contributions from the hospital and other grants.

DOMAIN	YEARS	PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES INFLUENCED BY TCI-SUPPORTED WORK
 <p>Coalition Development</p>	2-4	The leadership team devoted more than 1,200 meeting hours to building the NHTAC — with this time supported by TCI. The NHTAC now has 13 members — with the majority of organizations contributing funding to the collaborative — and 11 active projects in its portfolio. The NHTAC estimates it has leveraged \$450,000 in matching cash funds (hospital contributions and other grants) and \$615,000 in in-kind matching funds (primarily Wellville and the University of Connecticut).
 <p>Community Food Access/Built Environment</p>	2-4	The Healthy Hartford Hub will bring a critically needed full-service grocery store to the North End of Hartford. The NHTAC participates on the steering committee and has provided financial and capacity-building support to the 20-member Community Advisory Task Force. This development will positively impact the nearly 48,000 residents of North Hartford.
 <p>Programs to Support Healthy Behaviors</p>	2-4	TCI funds were used to support the North End Farmers Market and Cooking Matters classes reaching an estimated 6,000 residents (including approximately 350 program participants).
 <p>Tobacco Prevention</p>	3-4	The community engagement team trained more than a dozen youth to advocate for Tobacco 21 — contributing to successful local passage in 2019. This local work gave momentum to state efforts and built a cohort of youth advocates in the community and passed legislation in June 2019. Tobacco 21 passage benefits 25,600 youths 15-24 years in Hartford and close to 500,000 youths in Connecticut.
 <p>Complete Streets</p>	2-4	The Complete Streets Task Force's collaborative work — supported by the NHTAC — covers the city of Hartford (population 125,000).



Collaborative Development Work

Beginning in 2017, the NHTAC “design team” met weekly to develop the key concepts of the NHTAC, guided by ReThink Health’s Pathway for Transforming Health and Well-Being Through Regional Stewardship model. The model focuses on three key areas: broad stewardship, sound strategy, and sustainable financing, all anchored by a shared vision. This model outlines five stages for multisector coalitions: coming together, exploring regional goals, building an interdependent portfolio, making the portfolio happen, and living in the new ecosystem. The NHTAC set a TCI goal to reach the third stage.

Based on end-of-project surveys and interviews conducted by the local evaluation team, the majority of collaborative members believed the NHTAC made progress in:

- Shared vision, the composition of the collaborative, the members’ vested interests and authority, its theory of systems change and its portfolio of interventions, as well as its financial viability (advanced to the third stage of collaborative development).
- Clarifying the value proposition, design and implementation, resident and community involvement, legitimacy, the integrator function, and its financial plan (advanced to the second stage of collaborative development).
- There is less consensus about where the collaborative is in terms of measurement and shared data, indicating that more work remains to be done in that domain.

Key advancements made by the NHTAC include:

- The NHTAC has the majority of funding committed for fiscal year 2021, which includes coinvestment of member organizations.
- The NHTAC budget has transitioned into the Community Investment Department of the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, which will support sustainability as it embeds the NHTAC in a United Way Department.
- NHTAC membership now stands at 13, up from 10, and is poised to increase as they embark on a fiscal year 2021 strategy with Community Catalyst (with financial support from Trinity Health) to bring additional community and resident voices into the NHTAC.
- The NHTAC director and members have increased the number of NHTAC-supported projects as well as the number of initiatives not directly funded by the NHTAC in which members have significant influence to move forward on and can leverage the members and resources as needed of the NHTAC.
- The NHTAC portfolio includes 10 initiatives in addition to Well Being 360 that align to collaborative focus areas of childhood well-being and healthy weight.
- The NHTAC has had success within their portfolio of initiatives. For example, Tobacco 21 was passed in Hartford and then statewide, and the Healthy Hartford Hub grocery store project is aligning resident priorities using community investment and development to drive better health outcomes (see below).
- The NHTAC was selected to participate in the Connecticut State Innovation Model’s Health Enhancement Community Initiative and was able to influence the inclusion of childhood well-being as a focus area (see below).

NHTAC members are senior leaders with decision-making authority in their respective organizations. This allows them to leverage their combined resources and achieve greater collective impact toward shared goals. Key accomplishments indicating the NHTAC is increasing its impact in policy, systems, and environmental efforts in Hartford include these:

Invest Health grant

The NHTAC applied for and received an Invest Health Field Building grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Reinvestment Fund (they were also an awardee of the original Invest Health project). Awarded at the end of Year 3, this 12-month project provided funding and technical support to help move forward a pipeline of built environment projects and influence community investment systems, including the Healthy Hartford Hub.

The Healthy Hartford Hub is an initiative to bring the first full-service grocery store to the North End of Hartford. It also includes a plan for colocated health-promoting services. The project is co-led by Hartford Food System, Hartford Community Loan Fund, and the NHTAC and is guided by a resident Community Advisory Task Force. The Hartford Healthy Hub is also supported by Saint Francis Hospital.

REACH grant

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) selected the city of Hartford for a Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant focused on community and clinical integration. HHHS funded the NHTAC as the organizing coalition. The REACH initiative focuses on breastfeeding support; implementing tobacco-free policies in workplaces and multiunit housing; working with food vendors, distributors, and producers to create healthier food practices; and improving pedestrian, bike, and transit systems.

Health Enhancement Communities participation

The NHTAC also convened community agencies and residents on behalf of a state-led initiative to design a comprehensive framework for coordinating and financing long-term community-based health-promotion efforts (called Health Enhancement Communities [HECs], an initiative of the Connecticut State Innovation Model). Hartford was one of four reference communities initially and then was again selected as one of eight preplanning sites for the initiative. HECs are one way the state is looking to develop funding mechanisms for health care providers, payers, and others to invest in the root causes of health; if implemented, the HEC model could serve as a sustainable source of financing for the NHTAC.

All in all, the NHTAC's formation and development is a critical accomplishment that would have been unlikely without TCI.



Community Food Access/Built Environment and Programs to Support Healthy Behaviors

Well Being 360 provided direct financial support to the North End Farmers Market and a series of Cooking Matters classes — with direct, immediate, and visible benefit to community members. Well Being 360's support of these programs reached an estimated 6,000 residents (including 350 program participants).

In addition to the NHTAC leadership's steering committee participation for the Healthy Hartford Hub, the NHTAC provides financial and capacity-building support to the Hub's Community Advisory Task Force (CATF). The CATF — formed over two years ago — has worked to support and help drive a Hartford Healthy Hub that will honor community priorities. They have served as advocates for its development through letter writing, public speaking, and convenings.

The CATF was also able to take advantage of training resources from TCI technical assistance partner Community Catalyst. Community Catalyst led and continues to support a series of planning group calls that resulted in the development and execution of two capacity-building training sessions with the group in December 2019 and April 2020. This support will continue through December 2020.



Tobacco 21 Local and State Legislation

Well Being 360 became involved in the Mobilize Against Tobacco for Connecticut's Health (MATCH) Coalition efforts to pass local Tobacco 21 legislation during summer 2018. Well Being 360's Community Engagement Team worked with more than a dozen eighth- and ninth-graders from Hartford's North End over several months to develop the adolescents' advocacy skills to support passage of Tobacco 21 in Hartford. Six youth testified at a Health and Human Services Committee hearing, then at a public hearing, and a week later in front of Hartford's City Council. The coordination among partners, strategic allies at the government level, and youth involvement greatly contributed to Tobacco 21's passage in Hartford, the first municipality to pass the legislation in the state. Local work gave momentum to the state effort, and the state passed Tobacco 21 legislation in June 2019. This effort also built youths' capacity to advocate for other initiatives in the future that will promote their health and well-being.



Supporting Complete Streets

TCl supported the NHTAC leadership's participation in Hartford's Complete Streets Task Force, which developed and then advocated for the implementation of the city's Complete Streets plan and the adoption of the Hartford Bike Plan in 2019. Partners assisted with Complete Streets fundraising and active transportation improvements in Hartford.

The NHTAC was asked to lead the Complete Streets work required for the CDC REACH grant awarded to HHHS, beginning in Year 4 of TCl.

COVID-19

The changing environment brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has presented the NHTAC both challenges and opportunities. The diversion of members' time and attention, as well as tightening philanthropic support from hospital prospects, challenge the NHTAC's continued progress. On the other hand, the enormous health disparities revealed by the pandemic and its severe impact on the North End community highlight the importance of a collaborative such as NHTAC that already has prioritized addressing inequities and enacting changes in the social determinants of health and to improve health using an equity lens potentially even as an explicitly anti-racist group. As noted by one of the NHTAC members, this is "an opportunity" for the collaborative.

One area of work that was able to come together quickly in response to COVID-19 was the development of a city and area health system pandemic rapid response team. Initiated by the HHHS director, the group, which started as a daily call, now meets twice a month. The team was a direct result of relationships developed through TCl.

"The collaborative really focuses on the 'air game,' which is the systems, the policies, the environmental changes which are not often immediately experienced as impact by the community. But I have to say, during the pandemic, that really changed because you had this great flow of resources and communication between the collaborative and then networks of people and organizations who are working on the ground in the neighborhoods that were most impacted by the pandemic."

"Because the collaborative had taken shape, and relationships had formed, and trust has been built, it allowed [for] shifting gears and responding to the pandemic not in isolation, but really doing it in collaboration."

This work group has developed a process for collaboration that focuses on meeting the changing needs of community members during the pandemic — including the homeless and those without transportation — providing food, COVID 19 testing resources, personal protective equipment, and developing locally focused public health campaign materials.

Key Insights from TCI

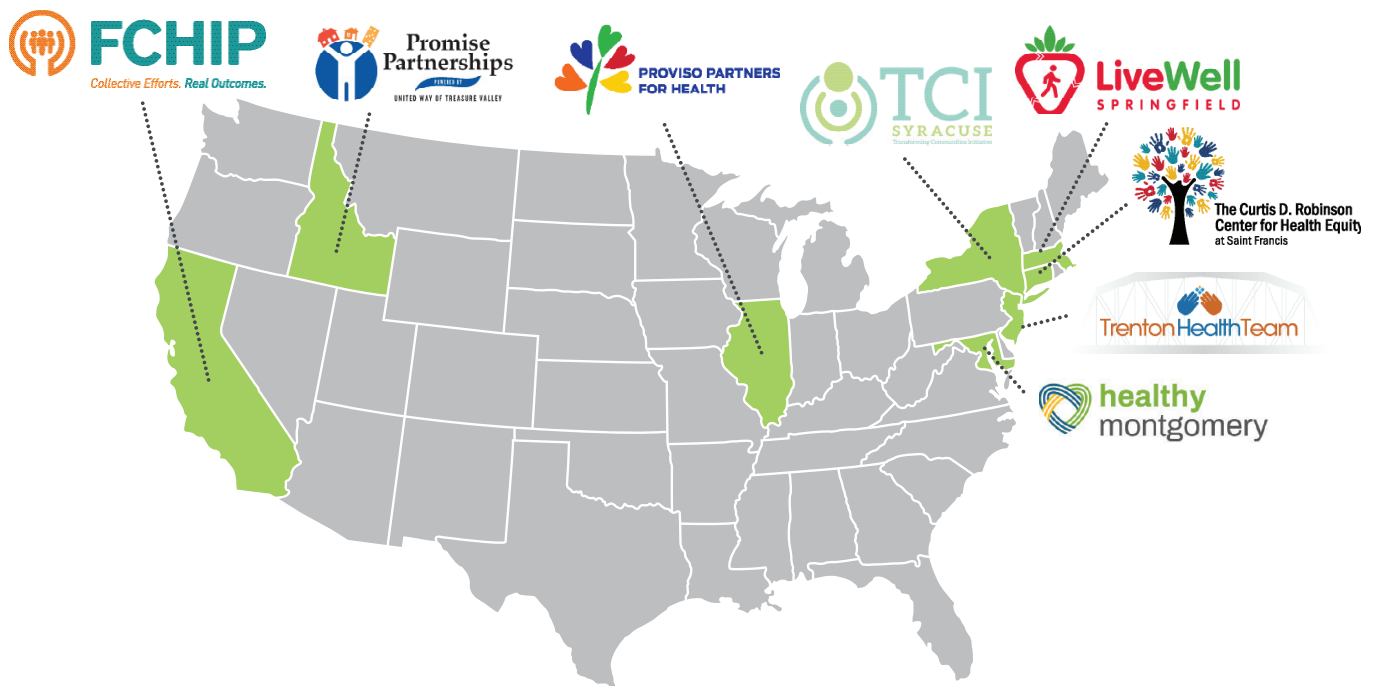
“TCI had communities do something really unique around having health systems lead and thinking about advancing health outside the walls of the hospital.”

- The blended, flexible funding approach worked really well and built the trust among partners more quickly than if TCI had more rigid investment guidelines. The shared program director role between the collaborative director and hospital lead was also effective.
- Building relationships, particularly in areas that are not within the span of influence of the collaborative partners, is critical and takes time. Some efforts to work in TCI priority areas that did not align with community priorities or partnership did not move forward.
- Getting the right leadership from each organization is important. By working with senior leaders who have access to and influence on to their organization’s CEO, they were able to make decisions and quickly get buy-in from the institutions represented.
- Developing a collaborative from the ground up takes time. The Well Being 360 leadership team met on a weekly basis for between one and three hours during the duration of the project; that translates to over 1,200 person hours dedicated to this work. The use of grant monies and match dollars to “support time for meetings” is unusual and was critical to their TCI initiative’s success.
- Intense investment in the NHTAC from multiple sources, including funding and thought leadership from Saint Francis Hospital, made success possible. Because the TCI investment was substantial and sustained over multiple years, the NHTAC advanced at a rapid rate. Layering on the Wellville support (which was in in-kind match of consultant dollars) and the evaluation support from the University of Connecticut was instrumental.
- Authentic engagement of community residents takes time and investment. When the institutions that are seeking to support the work are white and coming in with a lot of power and privilege, and the residents are primarily people of color, recognizing this dynamic, that it may be tense at times, is something to anticipate — and to allow space for. Technical assistance — like that provided by Community Catalyst — can be very helpful.
- Collaborative members embraced the idea that “your work is my work” and if a partner were applying for grant support or resources it was perfectly fine to describe the full portfolio of the collaborative (even if the organization’s contribution to the varied projects was widely different). As the collaborative was built, this sentiment resonated with members and served as a catalyst to building the trust that is critical for true collaborative work.

Looking Ahead

The NHTAC has a line of sight to funding through fiscal year 2021 and expects that the NHTAC will remain active at least through 2025 — which is the timeline for a number of the NHTAC initiatives like Wellville and the Promise Zone. Most NHTAC members have been solicited for coinvestment, and financial commitment is expected from many members. Leadership also anticipates continued investments from non-financially contributing members, including consulting services and grant-writing support. The NHTAC is also supported by other philanthropic grants like Invest Health and HEC. The NHTAC expects these project-based grants to continue, with the role of the NHTAC being the backbone and contracting out the bulk of the programmatic work to partners.

About the Transforming Communities Initiative



Trinity Health launched the Transforming Communities Initiative (TCI) in 2016 to provide grant funding and technical assistance to hospital-community partnerships. Between July 2016 and June 2020, these partnerships worked on a range of initiatives including tobacco prevention and reduction, public school wellness, early care centers' policies and practices, community food access and nutrition, built environment policies and infrastructure to improve walkability and safety (Complete Streets), breastfeeding policies, and economic development. Partnerships also built community capacity and strengthened local coalitions.

TCI technical assistance was provided by [ChangeLab Solutions](#), [Community Catalyst](#), [Public Good Projects](#), [Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids](#), and the [Georgia Health Policy Center \(GHPC\)](#).

GHPC — in close collaboration with local evaluators — conducted the TCI cross-site evaluation to assess partnership development and collaboration, as well as policy, systems, and environmental change reach, implementation, and impact. Data sources included key stakeholder interviews, TCI partner collaboration surveys, and project documents including site annual reports, meeting notes, site visits, and observations. Quotations in this profile are from stakeholder interviews and partner surveys.