

FUNDING COLLABORATION IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

Beyond ‘Return on Investment’

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Our community has reaped benefits in recent years from the addition of a new role, a collective impact health specialist. In this position, a grant writer applies for grants on behalf of others. Initially presented as a way to prevent missed opportunities for improvements in health and human services due to limited grant procurement resources, the collective impact health specialist role became a reality in 2014. Leaders from Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital in Oregon, a ministry of Providence St. Joseph Health, knew local nonprofits needed help to fund their innovative programs and activities. What they didn't know at the outset was the significant impact this community grant writer would have on galvanizing a culture of community collaboration.

A collective impact health specialist is a grant writer, a resource available at no charge to community partners — the experts in addressing social determinants of health. The role was created to leverage the hospital's community benefit investment dollars to procure grants and donations for local nonprofits to carry out priorities from the community health improvement plan. The role is structured to encourage the hospital and community partners to work together with clear communication, shared decision-making and a division of labor.

Funders have shown they recognize the value of this approach. In five years, grantors have directed nearly \$10 million dollars to community partners in the Columbia Gorge, representing almost a 20:1 return on investment. This role was recognized by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation when it awarded its Culture of Health Prize to the Columbia Gorge community in 2016.

To structure the program, Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital outsourced the contracting for the position to the United Way of the Columbia Gorge as a neutral party. The two organizations co-created the job functions of the collective impact health specialist, defining guidelines

for using the grant writing services and outlining a list of local, eligible agencies. They continue to provide ongoing oversight when needed.

Under the agreement, the hospital funds the collective impact health specialist as a community benefit contribution. For its part, the United Way oversees the employment contract and also convenes an advisory committee with representatives from the hospital, United Way and Columbia Gorge Health Council — a group tied to the local Medicaid program.

Paul Lindberg, JD, is the collective impact health specialist who works with partners across sectors to identify needs, convene partners to design initiatives to address those needs and secure funding. Since 2014, Lindberg has helped develop more than 30 new initiatives and secured funding to support those initiatives.

The job responsibilities of the collective impact health specialist include developing relationships with pertinent community organizations, promoting awareness of collaborative opportunities and activities, coaching local agencies on maximizing impact, researching funding opportunities and preparing project proposals with measurable outcomes.

This program focuses on the Providence Hood River Community Health Improvement Plan, which is based on the hospital's Community Health Needs Assessment. The community health improvement plan was developed by examining public health data and conducting surveys and listening sessions with community members and health care providers. Using the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Culture of Health Vision to Action Framework, the following "drivers" were established as priorities for grant proposals:

- Sense of community
- Built environment and physical conditions (housing affordability, access to healthy foods, youth safety, equity in physical activity opportunities and transportation)
- Access to comprehensive primary care, stable health insurance, mental health service and routine dental care

The Providence Hood River Community Health Improvement Plan forms the basis for funding community partners to address these prioritized community health needs. Examples of programs funded by grants from this program are:

- Afterschool programs to address childhood obesity
- Safe routes for children to walk to school
- Healthy corner stores
- Community health worker trainings
- Pathways community hub (part of a collaborative approach to care coordination)
- Community I.D. cards that improve access and security for vulnerable people
- Veggie Rx program providing vouchers to farmers markets for those experiencing food insecurity

It's important to note in many of these cases, Providence not only sponsored the grant writer, but also contributed cash used for required "matches" from funders.

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