

Background

In 2014, the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County engaged [Pratt Richards Group](#) to conduct an assessment of our impact and help us identify new strategic opportunities. Among the many things we learned through that engagement is that grantees were unclear about our long-term vision and specific goals. They wanted a clear statement of what we hope to achieve and how we use grantmaking to achieve it. In response, we have developed *Theory of Change: Our Guide to Mutual Success*, below.

This document is intended to help our grantees and community members at large understand the Foundation's rationale and strategies for improving access to healthcare in northern Lake County.

Theory of Change

A theory of change is a logical construct, one that begins with a desired outcome and then lays out a series of decisions or actions that, if taken, should lead to that outcome. In that sense, it is a blueprint for achieving long-term goals. It is also a useful framework for evaluating both ongoing decision making and progress toward goals.

While we believe that the Foundation can contribute to increasing access to healthcare in a number of ways, our *primary* role is to provide financial support for nonprofit organizations that directly achieve the desired outcomes identified at the population level.

HFNLC's theory of change, then, connects our mission—that is, our desired long-term impact—to our grantmaking and the work our grantees do.

The first column in the schematic below lists our strategies for change and the values that guide our work. The second shows the immediate outcomes of those strategies at the level of grantee organizations. The third column describes intermediate outcomes for both grantees and the persons they serve. The final column shows the long-term impact we believe our strategies can have.



Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County

Theory of Change: Our Guide to Mutual Success

If We....

Strategies:

- Award grants to support high quality efforts that improve access to health services for uninsured and underserved northern Lake County residents
- Use funds to fill critical gaps in services and operations that significantly increase their effectiveness
- Ensure that funds are available to the geographic priority areas
- Support efforts that are collaborative and promote coordination of care
- Actively look out for and help grantees address organizational capacity issues
- Are proactive in considering challenges and possible solutions for systemic change
- Work collaboratively with grantees, beyond funding to address their education, capacity, and resource needs

Values: Collaboration and Strategic Partnerships; Equity; Diversity; Leveraging Best Practices; Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Services; Measuring Impact; Playing a Leadership Role in the Community

STRATEGIES & VALUES

THEN...

Grantee Organizations will...

- Operate effective programs that reflect best practices
- Reach the "hardest to reach" residents
- Serve a greater number of individuals across northern Lake County
- Respond to key barriers to health care access for their populations
- Be strong in key organizational areas: board development, fundraising, evaluation, etc.
- Have linguistically and culturally competent boards and staff
- See a decrease in staff turnover
- Be collaborative with other key nonprofit, public, and private sector partners

IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

WHICH WILL LEAD TO...

Grantee Organizations that...

- Are sustainable
- Use HFLNC funds to leverage additional resources
- Improve coordination of care between primary care physicians, specialists, and case managers
- Collectively innovate and collaborate to face systemic challenges in healthcare

Clients/ Target Populations who...

- Have healthier behaviors and improved clinical outcomes
- Improve health literacy, especially of patients managing chronic health conditions
- Increase their knowledge of how to navigate the health system: know when and how to access health care providers and services
- Have an identified medical home
- Have better access to qualified staff

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

WHICH WILL IN TURN LEAD TO...

A reduction in unnecessary treatments; hospitalizations and emergency department visits; and costs to consumers and community

Improved health status of uninsured and underserved residents through access to comprehensive and integrated healthcare

Increased capacity of non-profit organizations and the healthcare system/ continuum of care

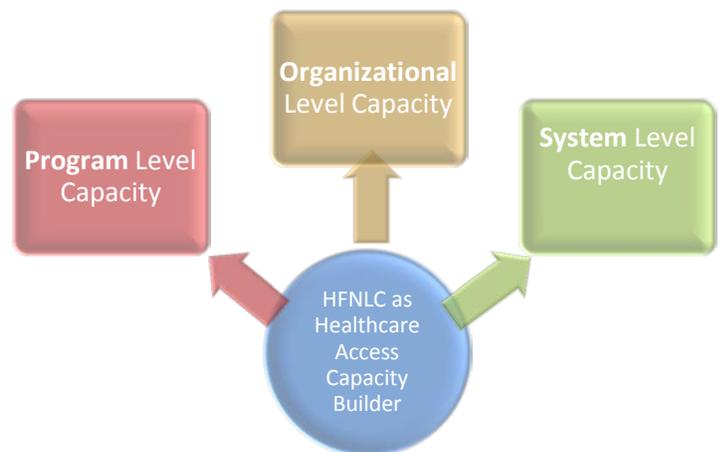
LONG-TERM IMPACT

Funding Priorities

Pratt Richards Group's report to the Foundation also showed that there is overwhelming agreement among grantees that we occupy a unique niche in Lake County's healthcare landscape and serve a highly valued function. There was praise for HFNLC's crucial role in funding important programs and initiatives, bringing attention to healthcare access issues, forging collaborations, and seeding new ideas. One interviewee noted that the Foundation's focus on access to healthcare is "spot on." As our theory of change demonstrates, our grantmaking focus on **improving access to quality healthcare** for northern Lake County's low-income residents will continue. We will continue to support programs that target uninsured or underinsured individuals and families, and underserved neighborhoods and communities.

New Strategic Direction

Northern Lake County comprises diverse communities with wide-ranging needs and organizations that serve them. A lack of social services and healthcare providers, low health literacy rates among residents, and growing poverty are among the issues that affect healthcare access today. As needs continue to grow, the nonprofit community must continue to improve its ability to serve those most in need. To this end, HFNLC also strives to **build capacity** of health services in northern Lake County.



We do this in three ways:

1. Increasing program effectiveness

Increasing program effectiveness means increasing grantees' ability to implement successful program models and strategies used elsewhere; evaluate their programs' effectiveness; demonstrate how programs improve the health status of the persons they serve; leverage limited resources in new ways in order to gain efficiencies and reduce duplication; and build strategic partnerships and alliances.

2. Ensuring organizational sustainability

Ensuring organizational sustainability means enabling grantees to improve their managerial and governance skills and resources, for example by conducting organizational assessments of strengths and weaknesses; strengthening their board of directors;

diversifying revenue sources; conducting strategic planning; developing evaluation methods and tools; and building information technology infrastructure.

3. Leveraging healthcare system resources

Leveraging healthcare system resources means giving local organizations the capacity to collaborate to build and strengthen northern Lake County's healthcare continuum of services. Examples include community needs assessments; feasibility studies; and planning and implementation of large-scale initiatives designed to improve coordination of services between systems, such as hospitals and community clinics.

Five Funding Strategies

Moving forward we will use the following funding strategies to achieve our two overarching goals: improving access to healthcare and building capacity.

Strategy 1: Clinical Care

High-quality, comprehensive, and coordinated health services are necessary to improve the health status of uninsured, underinsured, and medically underserved residents of northern Lake County.

Clinical Care includes medical, dental, vision, mental health, and case management service programs with the following typical characteristics:

- Services are provided in clinical settings;
- Clients/patients have treatment or service plans and clinical diagnoses, if applicable;
- Clients/patients have medical or health records;
- Services include access to specialists, diagnostic testing, medications, and equipment needed for comprehensive care, as well as case management that coordinates care or improves patients' participation in treatment;
- Improvements in clients/patients' health status are measureable; and
- Services are provided by licensed staff, if applicable.

Programs funded through this strategy monitor improvements in the clients' health status, such as improved cholesterol levels, decreased depression episodes, or improved oral health.

Strategy 2: Linkage to Care

Community-based outreach and education help improve residents' access to healthcare by improving their health literacy and their ability to make informed decisions about where and when to access healthcare, reduce unhealthy behaviors, and improve their health outcomes.

Linkage to Care provides education about prevalent health conditions, disease screenings, and connects community members to medical homes. The programs we fund typically:

- Provide services in community (non-clinical) settings;
- Offer individual or group education and disease screenings for prevalent health conditions;
- Offer one-on-one navigation assistance to access necessary health services; and
- Work toward measurable improvements in participants' health knowledge and linkage to care.

Programs funded through this strategy monitor improvements in the clients' health knowledge or behavior as well as linkage to care (e.g. an established medical home).

Strategy 3: Scholarships

Sufficient numbers of qualified healthcare professionals, in various fields, are needed to meet the growing demand for health services in northern Lake County.

Scholarships are awarded to post-secondary educational institutions, not directly to individuals. We seek to fund scholarship programs that include the following elements:

- Are offered by postsecondary educational institutions and prepare local residents for careers in high-demand areas of healthcare;
- Require recipients to demonstrate financial need and meet residency requirements (residents of northern Lake County);
- Require that recipients secure licensing to practice in their field; and
- Require recipients to return to the community to work or practice for two years in an underserved area of northern Lake County.

Programs funded through this strategy monitor student's successful completion of their education and mandatory employment requirements.

Strategy 4: Organizational Capacity Building

Organizations need resources and effective leaders with vision, skills, and tools to help them thrive.

Existing HFNLC grantees (i.e., those that receive funding through our Clinical Care, Linkage to Care, or Scholarship Programs) may apply for organizational capacity building grants.

These grants, if awarded, should help grantees address organizational needs such as board development, revenue diversification, strategic planning, evaluation, or information technology. We seek to fund projects that

- Address a well-defined organizational capacity need, one corroborated by internal assessments and literature on best practices or research;
- Partner with outside experts to (1) develop plans to address the capacity need and/or (2) facilitate the implementation of an existing plan to address the capacity need;
- Demonstrate that board members and senior staff are supportive and will remain committed both during the initiative and after; and
- Provide (1) a timeline for the work to be done and (2) realistic outcomes.

Projects funded through this strategy monitor indicators of progress and sustainability.

Please note that organizational capacity grants are by invitation only. Those interested in seeking funding should contact the HFNLC program officer.

Strategy 5: System Capacity Building

Organizations that collaborate and innovate are more likely to arrive at solutions that address persistent limitations in northern Lake County's health services. System innovations based on best practices lead to increased effectiveness and efficiency of health services in northern Lake County.

System capacity building grants are available for individual organizations or organizational partnerships that provide services in northern Lake County. Initiatives must address community or population needs within northern Lake County. We seek to fund initiatives that have considered the following:

- Relevant and current research that indicates a well-defined system capacity need;
- Engagement of the key stakeholders necessary to address the system capacity need;
- Leveraging available resources such as technology, knowledge and expertise, and money;
- Clearly defined goals for the system, benchmarks to measure progress, and anticipated outcomes; and
- A plan to collect data and an evaluation that informs the project while it progresses and ultimately demonstrates the desired healthcare delivery system improvements.

Initiatives funded through this strategy monitor indicators of access to services, coordination with other organizations, and effective and comprehensive service systems.

Please note that system capacity grants are by invitation only. Those interested in seeking funding should contact the HFNLC program officer.

Conclusion

The Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County believes that these five funding strategies will lead to

- A reduction in unnecessary treatments, hospitalizations and emergency visits;
- A reduction in healthcare costs to consumers and the community;
- Improved health status of the uninsured and underserved residents through access to comprehensive and integrated care; and
- Increased capacity of non-profit organizations and the health system/continuum of care.

We realize that not every request for funding will meet all of the guidelines presented above. We believe, however, that an organization that has thought deeply about these guidelines and addressed them will be more likely to succeed in improving access to healthcare in northern Lake County.

We encourage you to contact the HFNLC program officer with any questions and to discuss how your program fits our funding strategies and goals.