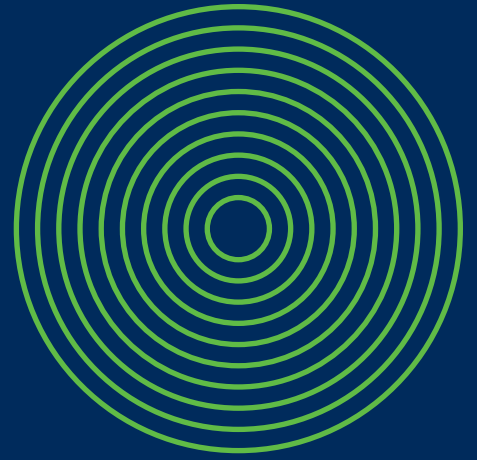**HOSPITAL COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE**
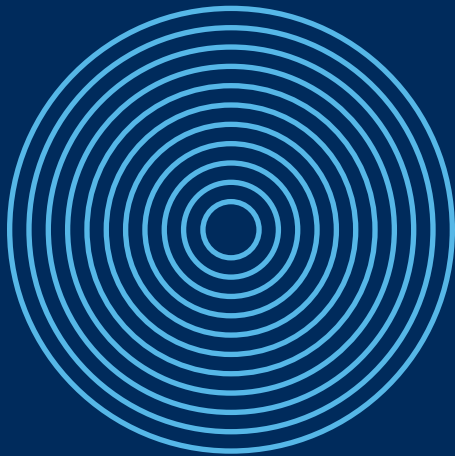Empowering Partnerships for Health Equity

HCC REPORT 2024

HEALTHIER TOGETHER

The Impact of the Hospital Community Collaborative on Community Health

New Jersey hospital and community partner teams gather in Princeton alongside teams from the American Hospital Association, New Jersey Hospital Association and Novartis US Foundation for an in-person convening, March 2023.
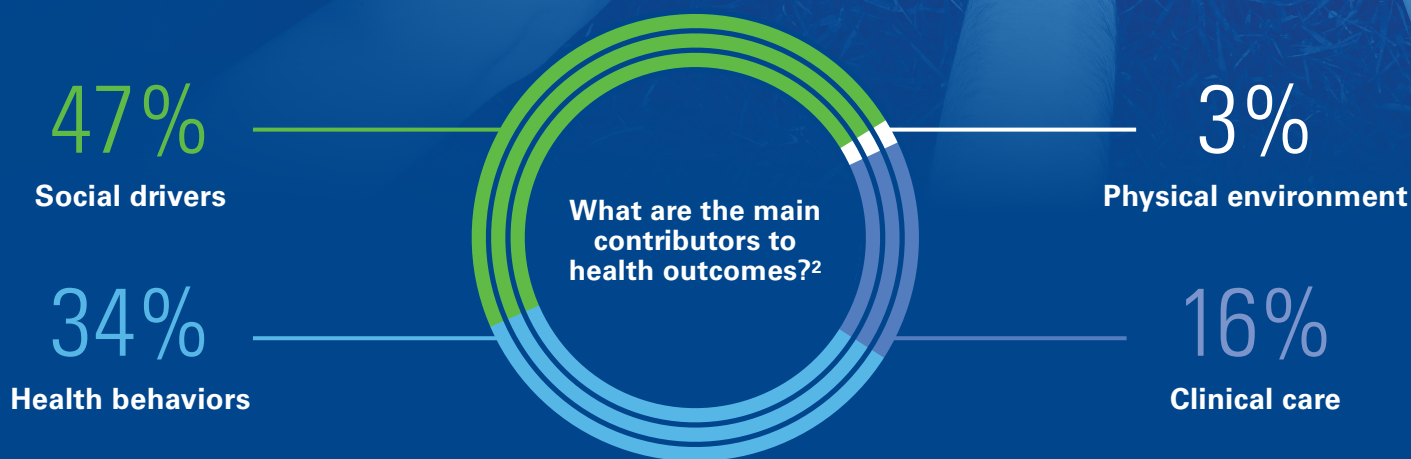
Health Equity Is Essential for Community Health and Well-being

In recent years, hospitals and health systems across the U.S. have made concerted efforts to address health equity with the goal of delivering high-quality, culturally competent care in the communities they serve. By addressing health care at a population level — carefully considering factors such as a patient's race, age, gender identity and sexual preference, geographic location or ability to pay — providers can help guide new strategies and enhance existing efforts to improve the health of communities.

Studies have shown that social drivers of health affect as much as 50% of the county-level variation in health outcomes, while clinical care impacts only 20%.[1] These areas beyond direct clinical interventions — beyond the four walls of the hospital — can make a significant impact on community health.

Partnerships between health care providers and community organizations help address these barriers head on, and can lead to healthier, more equitable communities. The American Hospital Association built the Hospital Community Collaborative to help foster collaboration and advance health equity.

47%
Social drivers

34%
Health behaviors

What are the main contributors to health outcomes?[2]

3%
Physical environment

16%
Clinical care

The Value of a Hospital-Community Partnership

"Thriving communities that foster health and well-being for all require an ecosystem of partners that work with community members to focus on programming, infrastructure and health care delivery that support equitable outcomes."

Nancy Myers, Vice President of Leadership and System Innovation, American Hospital Association

Social Drivers of Health

- Economic Stability
- Education Access and Quality
- Health Care Access and Quality
- Neighborhood and Built Environment
- Social and Community Context

1 "Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Examples of Successful Evidence-Based Strategies and Current Federal Efforts," ASPE. https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/e2b650cd64cf84aae8ff0fae7474af82/SDOH-Evidence-Review.pdf. April 2022.
2 Hood CM, Gennuso KP, Swain GR, et al. "County Health Rankings: Relationships Between Determinant Factors and Health Outcomes in 45 States." American Journal of Preventive Medicine. February 2016; 50(2): 129–35. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2015.08.024

What Is the Hospital Community Collaborative?

The AHA Hospital Community Collaborative (HCC) works to strengthen connections between hospitals and community organizations to improve health outcomes and advance health equity in their communities.

As both an online partnership education program and a national network of community health practitioners, the HCC promotes collaboration, data-driven decision-making and the strategic use of community resources — all to strengthen working relationships between hospitals and partnering community organizations to improve patient populations' health and well-being.

In addition to providing access to relevant research, tools and field-tested exercises that help strengthen partnerships, the HCC also includes opportunities for networking, coaching and collaboration with others doing similar work across the country.

In 2024, the HCC was refined as an asynchronous digital learning platform, allowing for users to complete the program and its activities at their own pace.

There are three foundational components to HCC:

1. Upon starting the program, hospital and community partner teams commit to working together to align strategies and resources with protected time for engaged collaboration.

2. Once involved, curated tools and resources help teams build foundational capabilities and tackle problems together.

3. As work progresses, a national network of peers, along with advice from community health experts, can provide teams with interactive guidance as needed.

At its core, the HCC is built for two or more organizations to complete the program together. However, as a go-at-your-own-pace learning platform, the HCC is capable of accommodating individual users who wish to gain partnership-building skills and practice their learnings with a partner organization at a later date.
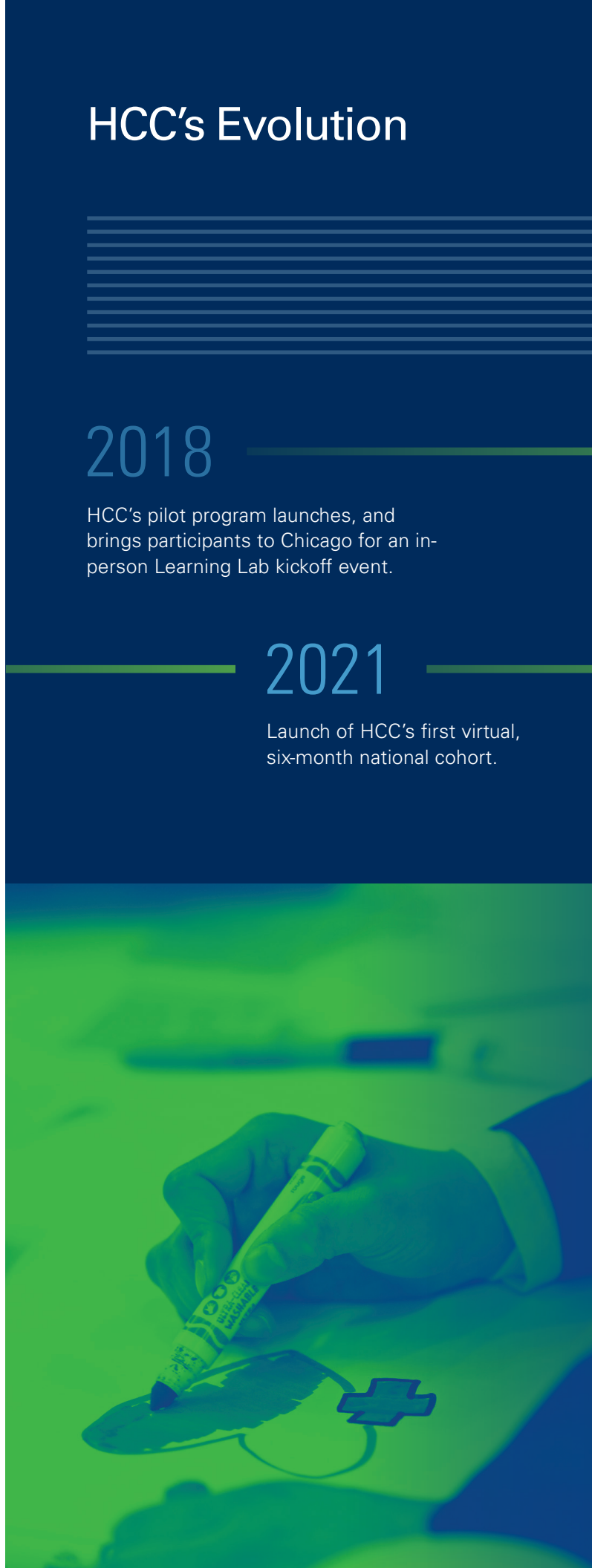
HCC's Evolution

2018

HCC's pilot program launches, and brings participants to Chicago for an in-person Learning Lab kickoff event.

2021

Launch of HCC's first virtual, six-month national cohort.

HCC's original model was developed around a national cohort of hospital and community partnership teams, consisting of leaders from each side, who would complete the program within a scheduled six-month time frame. Work was supported by scheduled live group sessions and coaching opportunities with subject matter experts, as well as access to a series of program modules featuring tools and exercises that teams would complete on their own time.

The HCC began with a yearlong pilot cohort in 2018 with funding from the Aetna Foundation. Following a pause in programming due to the pandemic, the HCC then returned to form with support from the Novartis US Foundation in late 2020. With a newly revised curriculum, the HCC grew to host two national cohorts, in 2021 and 2022. A state cohort focused on hospital-community partnerships in New Jersey also emerged during that time.

These cohorts helped create a national network of alumni who have helped the AHA refine the HCC experience for a new era.

2019
Pilot cohort programming continues throughout the year.

2020
Programming is paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2022
Launch of a second six-month national cohort and a 12-month New Jersey state cohort.

2024
New Jersey cohort ends; the HCC is redeveloped and launched as an asynchronous learning experience.

"Participating in the HCC cohort was a great experience that helped our team learn from others and refine our work. Also, participating in a structured program from the AHA helped with credibility for our project in the eyes of our health system leadership."

Brenda Biggs, Indiana University Health

Using Data to Improve Population Health

Titus Regional Medical Center approached the HCC with the idea to use data to transform health care in rural Texas. The rural health system in northeastern Texas collaborated with HCC partner Metopio, a health care analytics startup based in Chicago, to use data to help improve population health in Mount Pleasant. This HCC collaboration was their first endeavor in reaching out into the community, where they worked closely with the city of Mount Pleasant to determine areas of focused based on data.

Beginning as hyperlocal and focused on one county, this program expanded to a regional and statewide initiative:

- As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the health system used its HCC collaboration to better understand patient data and adjust course for treatment.

- The Titus County Wellness Coalition was created to include a community of 45 members representing schools, employers, local businesses and special populations.

HCC by the Numbers

In a span of five years, the HCC has formed 48 partnership teams and engaged 50 hospitals and 100 community organizations **across 25 states**.

"It was a good program for me because I was so new to community health and the concept of working with external partners. I was able to get to know some of Beacon's partners and found that very beneficial."

Carey Gaudern, Beacon Health System, Bremen Hospital

HOSPITAL COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE
Empowering Partnerships for Health Equity

5 Years

48 Partnership Teams

50 Hospitals
43 Urban + 7 Rural

1000 Community Organizations

25 States

Types of issues addressed:

12 Mental / behavioral health	**9** Digital health equity	**6** Social service coordination / optimization
5 Housing	**5** Food insecurity	**4** Access to care / preventive screenings
3 Regional planning / coalition building to address health equity	**2** Caregiver support	**1** COVID-19
1 Public space / environmental health		

What to Expect in the HCC Program

Whether part of a hospital, health system, local public health department or community-focused organization, HCC members are supported with the tools, resources and network needed to take their collaborative efforts to the next level.

AHA built the HCC program based on peer-reviewed content. HCC participants past and present are encouraged to use the resources and tools to build sustainable and lasting community partnerships.

This interactive program is designed to provide participants with the flexibility of an asynchronous program while maintaining an opportunity for ongoing peer-to-peer learning.

No two organizations are the same, and the HCC can provide the tools that partners need to succeed in the communities they serve. The curriculum has evolved to be self-guided so that participants can engage in and focus on segments that address their needs most directly. By giving teams an opportunity to focus on collaboration areas of highest need, the HCC helps establish a solid foundation for building and maintaining a trusted, effective partnership in the long term.

The HCC offers six online learning modules and these components:

1 **Videos:** View narratives from a network of leading community health experts covering:
- Key concepts, best practices and partnership theory from subject matter experts.
- Practical application examples and video case studies from HCC alumni.

2 **Exercises:** Reinforce learning with interactive games embedded in each module.

3 **Resources:** Explore best practices through educational readings and resources for community health partnerships.

4 **Metopio Data Tools:** All HCC participants receive 90 days of complimentary access to the Metopio population data visualization platform.

5 **Online Community:** Find additional support from leaders in the field through the HCC online community partners' discussion forum within the AHA Living Learning Network (LLN). This community allows participants to join in chat threads by topic, and it's a safe space to network and facilitate conversation.

6 **Virtual Coaching Sessions:** Live virtual coaching sessions, available through the LLN, provide feedback from community health experts.

7 **Partnership Workbook:** Participants receive six tactical and downloadable HCC partnership workbooks to complete in collaboration with community partners.

8 **Digital Badge:** Earn an official digital credential upon completing the program.

HCC Partnership Insights

Community partners have found success with:

★ **Digital expertise and technical support needs.**

★ **Partnerships to accomplish a specific goal.**

★ **Collaborative work aligned with existing organizational initiatives and goals.**

★ **New partnership opportunities and relationships.**

Community Spotlight #2:
Cumberland County, New Jersey

Improving Maternal Outcomes

Inspira Health and the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative (SNJPC) identified the need to help improve the health of community members who are pregnant and parenting.

Working together, the team identified that internet and cellular access was very limited in Cumberland and Salem counties, and that Spanish-speaking individuals had a very low level of access to those resources. Additionally, many were unaware that telehealth was a viable option for some obstetrics care.

Through their partnership, Inspira and SNJPC collaborated to improve patients' understanding of telehealth through Spanish language educational campaigns. The goal was to reduce barriers to care such as language, transportation and taking time off work.

Expanding access and knowledge about additional forms of care can improve health outcomes, efficiency of care delivery and patients' relationships with their providers.

HCC Modules and Learning Objectives

HOSPITAL COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE
Empowering Partnerships for Health Equity

1

Module 1
Know Your Partner

- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each partner and team member.
- Recognize where the partnership is aligned and misaligned.
- Establish a governance plan and shared transparent and frequent communication between partners.
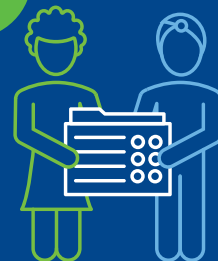
3

Module 3
Understanding Data

- Recognize the different types of data and know when to use them.
- Identify outcome measures and success metrics for your partnership.
- Learn how to evaluate and communicate the partnership's progress.

2

Module 2
Plan for Success

- Ensure all partners are aligned on the project vision, mission, goal, objectives and timeline.
- Articulate how this project contributes to respective organizations' strategies.

4

Module 4
Know Your Community

- Recognize new ways of thinking about community engagement and how these principles can be applied to your strategy.

- Identify community stakeholders, including new voices, who are ready to be engaged as long-term stewards of the community's well-being.

- Identify community strengths and determine how they can be used to meet community needs.

- Develop a plan to engage the community through authentic stakeholder relationships and leveraging community assets.

5

6

Module 5
Build the Business Case and Ensure Sustainability

- Create a sustainable plan based on new knowledge and resources.

- Identify key external and internal influencers and partners to continue the initiative.

- Explore new funding streams to sustain the program.

- Identify community strengths and determine how they can be used to meet community needs.

- Learn how to effectively engage and seek the support of management and boards.

Module 6
Telling Your Story

- Synthesize previous modules into a compelling narrative that can demonstrate the partnership's impact to various audiences, including (but not limited to) funders, media, government, other community partners and the hospital or health system.

- Learn how to present the narrative and recognize how to use it to continuously engage and gain support from key stakeholders and make cases internally at hospitals and health systems to further community partnerships.

To get started, visit **www.aha.org/hcc** and click "enroll" to become part of the collaborative.

Addressing Chronic Disease and Meeting Social Needs

In suburban Riverdale, Maryland, food insecurity issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the region's health care, religious and nonprofit communities needed to join forces to reach affected populations. Leaders from Luminis Health and the Greater Riverdale Thrives Community Coalition, which includes key community partner Solid Rock Church, partnered to reduce food insecurity in the area in a collaboration they call "Food as Medicine."

While the coalition was focused on food access, the hospital gathered data and found that diabetes was a growing concern facing the community from a clinical perspective. To help reduce hospital readmission rates and improve the health of the surrounding community, the partnership worked to align healthy food access with general food access and drive better health outcomes.

The partnership worked together to increase youth nutrition education, improve access to healthy food and implement a community garden program.

Who This Program Is Designed For

As part of HCC's cohort model of operation, nearly 50 hospitals and 100 community partners from across the country have participated in the program over the past several years. Historically, these teams included an AHA member hospital and a cross-sector partner of their choosing, such as a community-based social service agency, local health department or business partner. Program participants are typically front-line practitioners and leaders who work in hospitals, health systems, public health and community-based organizations.

The HCC is open to everyone, anywhere across the country — and is especially beneficial for those who work in health care or community organizations that partner with hospitals and health systems. The HCC caters to participants' needs and focus areas, for completion on their own timeline.

It has become increasingly important for health care professionals to know the community they serve and ensure community participation to address public health issues. The HCC teaches participants on all sides of the table the skills and building blocks needed to improve community health.

Potential participants include those who:

- Have approached or been approached by a partner to work together but don't know where to start.
- Would like to build on an existing partnership.
- Are interested in developing a new partnership.
- Need a partnership to accomplish a specific goal.
- Need digital expertise and technical support.

"Our partnership was already stable, but this allowed us to invite more folks into the partnership. This was a great launch pad, as we got to think more broadly about other community members who need to be at the table."

Maureen Hodge, Community Memorial Healthcare

Five Lessons Learned From Hospital and Community Partnerships

1 **Relationships power collaboration.**

- Hospitals and community organizations are stronger together.

- Each hospital and community organization in the HCC individually possesses strengths and resources, but their partnerships with each other and with stakeholders in their communities amplify the quality of their shared work.

- HCC partners find their ability to address member and community issues as a pair more valuable than as individual entities.

2 **Ecosystems matter.**

- This collaborative learning program has demonstrated the necessity of community-centered partnerships for driving innovation and ensuring more effective results.

3 **Inclusivity is key.**

- Authentic community engagement occurs through making sure that those in the community who are impacted are not just included, but a direct part of the process. This includes inclusivity in decision-making, mobilization, training and capacity-building, and involvement in data collection and implementation.

4 **Sustainability is multilayered.**

- Short-term pilots, grant initiatives and other phases of activity to test new ideas and practices offer promising ventures for generating innovative health and social needs programs.

5 **This work is challenging.**

- The ability to quickly pivot and adapt standard approaches to developing programs and partnerships is a challenging yet critical skill for organizations to learn.

- Throughout their HCC participation, many teams began with one project idea and objective but, through the planning and initial phases of the program, came to realize that their intended objective was not feasible at that time or they needed a new approach.

- The humility and flexibility teams have demonstrated are a testament to the challenging yet rewarding nature of the work.

What Makes an HCC Partnership Successful?

✓ **Partnership alignment on mission, vision and objective.**

✓ **Agreed-upon roles, responsibilities and shared accountability to better connect communities to resources.**

✓ **Collecting and analyzing data to uncover insights and determine actionable improvement strategies.**

✓ **Growing awareness and communication of unmet needs and plans to address them to key stakeholders through storytelling.**

Community Spotlight #4:
Edison, New Jersey

Increasing Community Resources to Improve Patient Populations

Hackensack Meridian Health is a network of hospitals in New Jersey that identified needed improvements in their facilities' ability to connect patients with community referral partners and resources. Hackensack Meridian partnered with Unite Us, an online referral platform company, to ensure that the health system's patient population could more easily access vital community resources. They developed a multilingual, consumer-accessible web platform that helps connect New Jersey residents to social and medical services in their communities. Their work aimed to improve patient access to care and strengthen Hackensack Meridian's relationship with community-based partners. Hackensack Meridian and Unite Us are looking to implement their intervention regionally in Northern New Jersey.

Supporting People Experiencing Homelessness

Atlanta's Grady Hospital had been experiencing a high volume of emergency department visits from individuals experiencing long-term homelessness, which had been exacerbated by a lack of communication and coordination between the hospital and the city. To address this, Grady partnered with the city of Atlanta's social services department to establish permanent supportive housing for the city's unhoused population.

Through a collaborative strategic plan, Grady and the city of Atlanta were able to broker an agreement with six other hospitals to support affordable housing efforts across the region and integrate health care into affordable housing solutions.

"The Hospital Community Collaborative will continue to bring leading-edge tactics, advice and examples to organizations as they work together to advance health and equity in their communities."

Nancy Myers, Vice President of Leadership and System Innovation, American Hospital Association

Q&A With Sean Thornton, Program Manager, American Hospital Association

Q: What are the key elements of a successful community partnership? When it works well, what does that look like?

A: The number-one element is trust. Without trust and clear communication, organizations are likelier to face challenges down the road. It's important to make sure all partners have clear expectations on what their shared goals are, and how they align with each organization's core function. The HCC curriculum helps support building trust through exercises meant to foster it.

Q: What are the primary tools and resources you use in the curriculum? How do you communicate these resources and tools to program participants?

A: The meat of our curriculum can primarily be found in the six module workbooks. These modules teach practitioners at hospitals and community organizations how to take key steps to strengthen their collaboration. This includes skills like holding a mission and vision strategy meeting, or sharpening storytelling skills that can open new doors with additional community partners, funders and other important stakeholders. Additionally, we provide data and evaluation tools that can help partnerships more clearly define and measure their work.

Q: How do you communicate these resources and tools to program participants?

A: These resources are readily available to anyone who registers for the HCC. What's important to communicate about them to participants is how customizable they are. No two hospital-community collaborations are exactly the same: Some may have just started work together. Others may know each other well yet need support with data and evaluation. And others may be further along and readying pitches for potential future stakeholders. Wherever a partnership may be, the HCC is here to provide a comprehensive experience that can be customized to fit such unique needs.
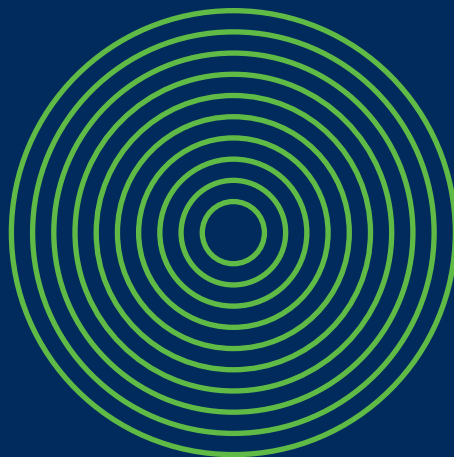
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To learn more or join the AHA's Hospital Community Collaborative, **visit www.aha.org/hcc.**