

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OF FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### 2011-2016

# ACCELERATE SUCCESS

Together, we can make a significant, lasting impact on Greater Hartford's two toughest issues

## Executive Summary

### Building on Our History to Help Drive Regional Prosperity

Over the course of the past year, the board and staff of the Hartford Foundation embarked on a considered process to develop a strategic plan. The goal was to determine how to use the Foundation's resources, expertise and relationships to their fullest extent to meet the highest needs of the Greater Hartford community. There was a desire to achieve greater impact and to take on a stronger leadership role, as had been expressed by our constituents over time.

The plan is derived from hard evidence of changing regional trends indicating striking economic, education and workforce preparedness gaps. The plan also reflects significant community input about these trends, as well as about the future role that the Hartford Foundation might play in influencing these trends for the benefit of *all* residents of this region.

Further, the plan grows from the Foundation's 86-year history, and its core competencies and values. It builds on its primary strengths as a responsive grantmaker, expertise in building the capacity of nonprofit organizations, and deeper knowledge gained across several education, adult literacy and workforce initiatives. The plan also calls for the Hartford Foundation to play a stronger leadership role in the region, and to make fuller use of all the philanthropic tools that 21st century community foundations have at their disposal.

After a year of broad community input and thoughtful Foundation-wide planning, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving not only reaffirms its mission to improve the quality of life for residents throughout the region and its longstanding commitment to broad-based, responsive grantmaking, but also announces its plan to focus on two key strategic areas. These areas are: helping to close the education achievement gap and supporting the development of a skilled workforce in the region.

#### Mission of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

As Greater Hartford's community-wide charitable endowment, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is permanently committed to improving the quality of life for residents throughout the region. To achieve this goal, we:

- provide financial and other support that enables people and institutions to serve the community effectively;
- promote informed charitable giving in order to expand the region's philanthropic resources; and
- participate actively in efforts to identify important community needs and opportunities, as well as the means to address them.

Many of the people we spoke with in our community noted proudly that the Greater Hartford region offers residents a high quality of life in some of the most livable communities.

However, many also articulated what the data confirm: the Greater Hartford region has among the largest income gaps – and *the* largest achievement gap – in the country.

Without collective community action, many of our region’s residents will never have the opportunity to prosper. A well-educated and skilled workforce is essential to productive and livable communities, including attracting

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and retaining industry. To remain economically competitive, the entire region needs an educated population fortified with the skills necessary to succeed in 21<sup>st</sup> century careers.

Responding to community challenges and strong community consensus, building on core Foundation strengths, and the desire to have greater long-term, systemic impact, the Hartford Foundation created a **strategic vision** to help guide its activities over the next five years:

Working with community members, nonprofits, business, government, and other funders, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving will help prepare residents of the Greater Hartford region to compete and prosper in our global economy through an integrated system of high quality education and workforce development.

To actualize the strategic vision, the Hartford Foundation will focus on two strategic areas:

**1) Birth--Adulthood Education:** To help close the achievement gap by strengthening support for learning from birth to adulthood.

**2) Workforce Development:** To support the preparation of a skilled workforce in the region.

## A Facilitative Community Leadership Role: A Growing Community Foundation Trend

Similar to other leading community foundation peers,<sup>1</sup> the Hartford Foundation is responding to more complex community challenges with a new set of roles along with traditional responsive grantmaking. Noting that community foundations are the widely acknowledged community backbone that address a wide range of community needs and their nonprofits, the Foundation Center states a common perception in *Foundation Growth and Giving Estimates, Current Outlook, 2010*. At no time was this role tested more than during the current economic downturn. Similar to the Hartford Foundation, many community foundations carry out this role in regions witnessing dramatic population and economic sector changes. Increasing diversity, an aging population and widening gaps between the “haves” and the “have nots” are common in many communities. The nonprofit sector has mushroomed to

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<sup>1</sup> Consider the Boston Foundation, the Baltimore Foundation and the Cleveland Foundation, for example.

respond to these needs, often without the organizational infrastructure or funding to support it, creating strong competition for resources.

Similar to other community foundations, the Hartford Foundation finds it necessary to respond to these challenges by building on its distinctive position with relationships in the nonprofit, government and donor communities. Preparing residents across the region to prosper requires resources and problem-solving skills greater than those of the Hartford Foundation alone. Therefore, as it looks to the future, the Hartford Foundation will also take on a more facilitative leadership role to marshal the collective resources of the Greater Hartford region.

The Foundation will be a collaborator with individual, public, business, philanthropic, and nonprofit players; a convener; a network builder and information disseminator; a sector strengthener; and an influencer for effective policy. The Hartford Foundation intends to work to leverage new dollars to address these key areas and to connect even more effectively to donors by offering unparalleled, deep knowledge of community needs and access to tested organizational and leadership relationships.

As a community foundation and anchor in Greater Hartford, the Foundation will continue in its core role of grantmaker and as a strong fiscal manager of the community's charitable endowment.

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## Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

To understand the current community conditions, and the Hartford Foundation's strengths and challenges, the planning work began with an extensive fact-finding phase. The Foundation reached out to 1,200 members of the community who serve in a wide range of roles – nonprofit leaders, donors, funders, businesspeople, government officials, and political and community leaders – and through surveys, interviews and focus groups, nearly 700 gave us their perspectives on regional issues and future priorities for the Hartford Foundation. Combined with a socio-demographic analysis, this input overwhelmingly directed the Hartford Foundation's board to determine the vision and strategic priorities: to prepare residents of Greater Hartford to compete and prosper in our global economy through an integrated system of high-quality education and workforce development.

Through several iterations over the following six months, the Hartford Foundation staff detailed the strategic areas into a theory of change, goals and specific objectives, assuring that the plan of future work grew from the Foundation's existing content and capacity strengths, as well as those of the partners and the community.

Sector strengthening and increasing the community's and the Hartford Foundation's abilities to collect and use data are cross-cutting efforts that underpin all the strategic work. Finally,

embedded in the strategic plan is a commitment to build the capacity of individual staff and the Foundation as a whole, as well as to align the work of all departments so that we can work effectively and collectively toward our strategic goals.

### Principles Guiding the Strategic Work

Prior to detailing the strategic area goals, the Hartford Foundation articulated a set of principles to steer the strategic work:

- Build on the Foundation's and the community's current work in the areas of capacity building, research, advocacy, leadership, and collaborations.
- Apply grantmaking tools to support promising community solutions.
- Build the capacity of nonprofits to maintain a strong and thriving nonprofit sector.
- Support community access to and use of evaluation, research, evidence-based practices, and core standards and assessments.
- Encourage systemic change through strengthened connections among community members, nonprofits, business, government, and other funders.
- Create a learning environment that supports innovation and broadly shares knowledge.
- Serve as a catalyst, convener, facilitator, and engaged participant in community planning and problem-solving efforts.
- Engage donors and residents to realize shared goals.
- Pursue a policy and advocacy agenda that supports long-term solutions to community challenges.

### Summary of Strategic Areas, Goals and Objectives

Along with these principles, fostering strong community partnerships, building best practices, and supporting effective public policies are common denominators across the two strategic areas and their goals and objectives. Priority goals and objectives over the first two and one-half years are summarized below.

#### Strategic Area 1: Birth-Adulthood Education -- To help close the achievement gap by strengthening support for learning from birth to adulthood

**Education Goal 1: Strengthen comprehensive supports for young children and families, from birth to grade three, assuring learning readiness and early academic success.**

#### Objectives:

- Continue to support and enhance the development of community leadership infrastructure for a shared vision of early childhood, in partnership with municipal and community-based organizations.
- Create a replicable model of *Brighter Futures* and implement it in one additional municipality, with local partners.

- Align early childhood work locally with state and federal levels for a comprehensive early childhood education system in Connecticut.

**Education Goal 2: Help create a community agenda and comprehensive system of support and opportunities for children and families (grade K-12) to increase positive academic and developmental outcomes.**

**Objectives:**

- Continue to strengthen and build the Hartford Community Schools Initiative.
- Help build a shared community agenda and capacity to advance evidence-based, comprehensive developmental education needs of children and youth.
- Pursue supportive policy to improve academic and developmental outcomes for children and youth.

**Education Goal 3: Increase postsecondary success for residents in two- and four-year colleges.**

**Objectives:**

- Identify and build a local postsecondary partnership to develop and implement a shared agenda across public education and two- and four-year colleges.
- Create an evidence-based plan and use public accountability mechanisms.
- Support emerging and ongoing promising practices to advance postsecondary success.

**Strategic Area 2: Workforce Development -- To support the preparation of a skilled workforce in the region**

**Workforce Goal 1: Enhance, coordinate and align services and programs that prepare and employ individuals in a skilled workforce.**

**Objectives:**

- Assess past and current Foundation investments to enhance the current workforce development system.
- Assess the full range of existing workforce development efforts across the region to develop strategies to further support workforce development and related systems.
- Implement supports to enhance partnerships, systems and related issues.

**Workforce Goal 2: Achieve measurable gains in adult literacy in the region.**

**Objectives:**

- Strengthen the adult literacy partnership to develop a regional adult literacy system.
- Increase Foundation support of adult literacy projects, focusing on contextualized learning, and bring them to scale.
- Advocate for adult literacy and workforce development in the region, and increase public understanding of the linkages between adult literacy and workforce.

The Hartford Foundation's experience with sector strengthening has demonstrated the importance of investing in organizational capacity as a factor central to successful program and strategy execution. This fundamental organizational commitment continues, and expands to include a focus on increasing community abilities to collect, analyze and use data for effective program and policy decision-making. As a result, two cross-cutting goals support the successful execution of the strategic areas, goals and objectives:

**Cross-Cutting Goal 1: Nonprofit Capacity Building - Provide resources and support (including through the Nonprofit Support Program) that will strengthen: 1) agencies carrying out agreed-to strategies and activities in support of the Foundation's strategic areas; and 2) improved collaboration among agencies, foundations, government, and any other partners implementing projects in the strategic areas.**

**Objectives:**

- Enhance organizational capacity in areas such as planning, financial management, technology, and others as needed.
- Support and enhance nonprofit leadership among agencies involved in carrying out strategic areas.
- Improve the ability to collaborate with partners among foundations, government, agencies, and other potential partners.

**Cross-Cutting Goal 2: Data and Technology - Develop and support systems for data and information collection, analysis and sharing to establish community needs and measure outcomes.**

**Objectives:**

- In partnership with community and educational institutions, support the collection, analysis and sharing of broad community data about the quality of life in our region, with a focus on our strategic areas, for the public's information and to help build the case for collective action – in particular, through an Indicators Project.
- Support the capacity of the Hartford Foundation to work with partners in collecting and sharing, in a coordinated way, data pertinent to the strategic areas as a means of gauging our individual and collective progress.
- Enhance the Foundation's internal data systems to more efficiently collect, analyze and share data/information.

### **Intended Long-Term Outcomes**

Working collectively with community stakeholders, the Hartford Foundation expects the region to experience these long-term outcomes:

**In education:**

- Sustained community leadership for high-quality education for all children.
- Increased and more diverse dollars raised for education.

- Reduced achievement gap in the Hartford region at the kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels.

In workforce development:

- Increased local public and private investment in workforce training and adult education services.
- Aligned institutional, legislative, and municipal policy changes that support the needs of the community and a coordinated workforce system.
- Increased adult work readiness and literacy rates.

### Becoming Stronger Learning Partners

These outcomes are our desired ends, and the proposed strategy is our roadmap. To help the Hartford Foundation and its community partners learn how to most effectively work together to achieve these outcomes, evaluation, knowledge sharing and learning will play a stronger role in our future. Along with building the Hartford Foundation's internal learning capacity, investments in formative and impact evaluations, publications, public forums and convenings will help drive this learning agenda.

This plan provides the Hartford Foundation with a roadmap toward achieving its strategic vision of preparing residents of the region to prosper.

### Our Next Steps: Working to Achieve these Outcomes Together

This plan provides the Hartford Foundation with a roadmap toward achieving its strategic vision of preparing residents of the region to prosper. This builds soundly on the Hartford Foundation's continuing work in the education, literacy and workforce development arenas, and on that of many of our partners. Over the next several months and beyond, we will be talking with our current partners, and potential new ones, to learn more about how we can work together to achieve our desired outcomes.

As a living document, we expect this plan to be flexible. We will adjust it as we learn more, try new approaches, build on lessons learned, involve new partners, and respond to changes in the community. We will keep our constituents and the community informed of our collective progress, and invite you to continue to give us feedback, so that together, we will help shape a successful future for our region – and all of its residents.