



Member Spotlight

When considering the health needs of a state as large and diverse as New York, narrowing in on the most important issues can be quite a daunting task. Rather than trying to fund as many causes as possible while yielding little results, the New York State Health Foundation has begun to make more strategic choices in their funding, both for greater impact and for reaching their broad base of beneficiaries.

Since its establishment in 2007, the foundation has seen the benefit of keeping a focused and intentional strategy in their grantmaking. The foundation made its primary areas of focus in the following areas: reducing the amount of uninsured New Yorkers; improving diabetes prevention and management; and improving the integration of care for those who cope with mental health and substance abuse disorders simultaneously. These overarching goals formed their core priorities, but there was still a desire to meet the greatest needs of the state over time. As the foundation approaches its fifth anniversary, it has begun a campaign to elicit feedback from their grantee community to best understand where grantmaking dollars should be directed in the coming years.

To conduct this process, the foundation has taken a step back and asked itself a question: “Are we focusing our grant dollars on the challenges most important and most possible to work on through philanthropy?” This reassessment of their priority areas is both necessary and wise; taking in the grantee perspective will guide the foundation to either readjust their focus or more aggressively target a current priority.

The board will discuss the ideas that come from grantees and use the input to inform the planning process and funding initiatives. President and CEO James R. Knickman contacted grantees via email saying, “We look to you as partners in creating impact and advancing social change — not only through our grantmaking dollars, but also through our commitment to serve as a neutral convener, to inform policy and practice through research and analysis, and to share our lessons learned — and appreciate your advice about where we might best focus our efforts.” Acknowledging how the missions of their grantees align with their own, the foundation is taking a collaborative approach to tackling the most pressing problems, while strengthening communal ties. Seeking the advice of stakeholders gives the foundation the opportunity to tap into the minds of those who share common passions, goals and hopes for the future of the New York State health conditions.