

**Goals:** Metro Hartford Progress Points is part of the Hartford Foundation's [Community Indicators Project](#). The goal for Progress Points is to develop an evidence-based consensus on issues and opportunities for the region for deliberate, long-term progress. The long-term goal is shared prosperity and economic vitality for metro Hartford.

**Background:** Progress Points represents a collective effort to understand the root causes of our region's challenges. In the absence of regional government, metro Hartford must rely on sustained collaboration among leaders to address regional challenges.

**Annual Process:** The partners meet annually with Hartford Foundation staff to review indicators and trends on current and emerging challenges for the region. Based on this review, we reach consensus on a set of metrics and graphics to fit in a brochure-style report. Each year we hire an external design firm for the report creation; design and printing costs are typically in the \$15,000 - \$20,000 range. The report is followed with media outreach and public engagement.

**Impact to date:** With the support of the Hartford Foundation, a group of nine partners have issued three annual reports, followed with substantial media coverage, over 100 public discussions, and impact on planning, strategy and policy in the region. Beyond raising awareness through public engagement, primary uses of the report have been:

- Development of Hartford Foundation strategic plan incorporated framework from 2015 report
- Proposals and needs statements for state and federal grants (e.g. CT Next Innovation Place RFP, Hartford SC2 proposals)
- Program support for Transport Hartford Academy (at Center for Latino Progress), collaboration on Reentry employer engagement by Metro Hartford Alliance

**Where are we now?** After three reports, we have paused to 'reimagine' Progress Points with key stakeholders. In December, we co-hosted a discussion with the CRCOG Foundation, the partners and their invitees at the Elmwood Community Center to ask the question: '**Should we move from informing to impact?**' The answer was an overwhelming 'yes.'

A summary of the meeting recommended that a small working group develop a plan '**to move from informing to impact.**' Key recommendations from the summary report were grouped into three areas, which have been reviewed by the working group in a series of three meetings, concluding in April 2017:

- Leadership and a Shared Agenda:
  - o Develop a legislative and policy agenda proposing specific policies and actions
  - o Reach out to key public sector leaders on a regular basis to refine the policy agenda
  - o Continue to issue 'Progress Points,' with implications of inaction
- Regional Thinking and Image:
  - o Develop a message and communication strategy to demonstrate the benefits of acting with a regional mindset
  - o Include successes to counter the negative messages contributing to the poor image and brand of the region
- Organizational Infrastructure:
  - o Hartford Foundation and CRCOG Foundation serve in an interim convening role
  - o Decide on an organizational structure to advance the agenda and specific projects

**Where should we go?** A review of similar projects nationally suggests three key elements for those projects that have achieved impact:

- Focus on issues on which progress is possible (dynamic vs. fixed factors)
- Engaged leadership and
- Cross-sector collaboration

In its current state, Progress Points has been successful at two of these: generating high-quality reports on key issues and encouraging cross-sector collaboration with nonprofits, government, philanthropy and higher education. However, inconsistent engagement by top leadership has led to limited impact.

The 2016 Progress Points report used John Kotter's eight-step 'Model for Transformational Change' as a road map for the region. Step 1 is '**Create Urgency**' – we believe the Progress Points reports successfully raise the sense of urgency for the region. Step 2 is '**Build a Team**' – while we have the elements of this, Kotter identifies the main error on this step as 'not identifying a powerful enough guiding coalition.'

Consequently, our decision-making for Progress Points boils down to two related, but separate, questions:

- Do we wish to continue issuing annual reports tracking data on key issues for the region?
- Who is best suited to take on the role of 'engaging leadership' in our region?

The issues and leadership are interrelated - some partners would be best engaged with a 'big, hairy audacious goal,' while others would support a 'cascade of small, winnable challenges.' Clear governance and leadership are necessary for identifying topics or issue areas for focus. Ultimately, there is substantial appetite for an initiative focused on the long-term economic prosperity of the region, but questions about who would lead such an effort.

### **Organizational models:**

A review of similar projects identifies three primary organizational models, with different kinds of organization(s) driving the agenda:

- **Private sector-driven:** Business leaders set the agenda and utilize relationships to move issues forward. Often a funder will provide support for staff and research. The Itasca Project is an example of this, with a virtual staff, analytical support from McKinsey and financial support from local foundations.
- **Foundation-driven:** A local foundation sets the agenda and identifies partners based on context. Projects reflect organizational values, but go beyond grantmaking to utilize data, research, public engagement and public policy for impact. The Boston Foundation's Civic Leadership Fund and other 'civic leadership' initiatives have emerged from Community Indicators projects.
- **Resident-led:** Grassroots initiatives seek to engage and organize residents directly, relying on networks of volunteers for participants to identify needs and set a course of action through smaller teams or working groups. Philanthropy often provides research and organizational support. Jacksonville Community Council and the Citizen's League are examples of this model.

A final option would be to seek only to inform, with no focus on engaging leadership around an action agenda. In this model, the annual reports serve as a credible, neutral resource for data and information. While this would go against the call to 'move from informing to impact,' many initiatives take this approach via reporting, producing an 'atlas' or 'encyclopedia' resource.