



Mid-Initiative Report

BACKGROUND

The George Family Foundation fosters wholeness in mind, body, spirit and community by developing authentic leaders and supporting transformative programs serving the common good.

The Foundation has a long history of building an integrative approach to our health care system. In 2013, the Board and staff began convening and exploring what it might look like to focus on a grassroots approach to building integrative health and healing (IHH) within community. The Catalyst Initiative launched in early 2014.

Catalyst is working to empower individuals and communities to improve their health and wellbeing through the adoption of integrative health practices, and supporting culturally grounded ways of normalizing healthy behaviors.

We view integrative health and healing as a practical approach to care that addresses the full range of physical, emotional, mental, social, spiritual and environmental influences that affect a person's health. We believe its use not only can improve the health of individuals—it can enhance the cost effectiveness of health care delivery for providers and payers.

Our vision is one of transformation:

To transform the consciousness of Minnesotans about their health so that a) self-care is viewed as the true primary care; b) people understand that they are connected in mind, body and spirit and have immense self-healing capacities; and c) the best medicine combines the best of western medicine interventions with a full range of healing modalities.

WHY THIS APPROACH?

We listened closely to people in communities where health disparities and toxic stress are high, and access to integrative therapies is limited. We concluded that to have the deepest impact, offer the biggest return on investment, galvanize additional resources, and positively contribute to a transformation of Minnesota's health care system, intentional focus on these populations would be prioritized.

Data show communities of color and American Indians in Minnesota are more likely to suffer from chronic illnesses and experience shorter life spans. Chronic illnesses, including diabetes mellitus, arthritis, hypertension and chronic heart disease, account for between 46 and 75 percent of health care costs today. Lifestyle, diet, exercise, habits and situational/toxic stress play a major part in both the etiology and course of such conditions. We also took into consideration the role of stress on the immune system, and on the onset and severity of chronic disease. Research shows that between 70 and 90 percent of chronic disease is related to stress. Adverse childhood experiences data also show that traumatic or adverse incidents in childhood have a correlation to poor health outcomes in adulthood, including an increased likelihood of poor mental health.

THE CHALLENGE

How could Catalyst embed culturally grounded self-care practices that would be replicable and sustainable within these communities?

STRATEGY

We listened deeply to community voices to better understand how successful social norm shifts toward healthy behaviors take root, and what our role in catalyzing these shifts should be.

TARGETED INVESTMENTS: To maximize our modest budget of \$1 million per year and a small staff, we developed three funding priority areas:

- ▶ Group convenings as a method of inviting early adopters of integrative practices to expand their network with others who share their desire to shift social norms related to self-care.
- ▶ Training and skill building as an "entry point" to open the experience and deepen commitment among individuals and organizations.
- ▶ One-time seed grants to allow non-profit organizations to build upon the vision of healthier populations through the normalization and practice of mind body spirit work that has meaning within their cultural context.



ONE YEAR LATER, KEY MILESTONES

- ▶ We identified “early adopters” of integrative health practices, particularly where cultural resonance and energy exist.
- ▶ Incorporated the need for diverse thought leadership – we invited an advisory cabinet with expertise in integrative health and healing (IHH), community dynamics and health care systems to share their wisdom.
- ▶ Recognized the sustainable potential of networks, and began to intentionally link organizations with aligned missions and practices to expand these networks.
- ▶ Launched a communications strategy focused on articulating the health and social benefits of IHH in communities.
- ▶ Committed to a developmental evaluation process to generate information from multiple sources to document results and lessons learned and guide decision-making.
- ▶ Began leveraging Catalyst with complementary initiatives in Minnesota to expand its impact.
- ▶ The 2015 Catalyst Highlight Video illustrates these key milestones. View this video on our website at <http://www.georgefamilyfoundation.org/catalyst-initiative/news-resources/digital-stories>

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Personal connections are crucial.** Carefully crafted, large group convenings featuring culturally specific healing practices free from the distractions of formal presentations and PowerPoints result in sustainable human connections with and among new partners, sharing of resources and enhanced normalization of self-care practices. Those who have attended these convenings report the events are environments where a healthy ‘community of practice’ is emerging, and where their own healing is amplified. One participant’s comment exemplifies this perspective:

“I appreciate the focus and awareness that trauma comes from all levels and experiences. It is a human thing to share our stories in order to heal – both as individuals and collectively.”

- ▶ **NOW WHAT?** Strategically designed convenings will continue to build or enhance networks. We are exploring joint convenings with other funders to leverage resources.

2. **Identifying the impact of trauma as a health barrier opens new possibilities for healing.** In dialog sessions across the state, Catalyst has learned that linking IHH practices to healing from trauma resonates deeply with identified groups (e.g., American Indians, women veterans, other communities) leading to our articulation of a Trauma Healing Practice Approach. Interest in and adoption of IHH practices is enhanced when they connect to the needs of communities as they define them. Our Trauma 2.0 convening participants gained personal insights. One commented:

“I learned to let go of my pain. I am going to share this with my daughter, I want her to learn how to let it go.”

- ▶ **NOW WHAT?** We are planning a major event on September 27, 2016 (Building Resilience: Restoring our Human Capacity to Heal) to explore a pivotal shift toward a “trauma healing practice” approach to improving health and wellbeing. A literature review will be available to examine relevant data supporting the use of IHH practices to heal trauma. We will continue to develop communication strategies to reinforce and deepen what these events unleash – developing a critical mass of practitioners and supporters.

3. **Restoring the value and practice of traditional cultural healing is vital to improved health.** Every cultural/ethnic community has traditional healing practices that have been overshadowed by Western medicine. Re-introducing or celebrating these practices appears to build a cultural connection to preventive care as well as being a healing factor. The human narrative is a powerful “attractor” for shifting social norms toward more healthful behaviors. This is how one community leader put it:

“We participated in the introduction to curanderismo (traditional healing) class. It reminded me how healing is personal but communities can also be healed. We started with a group of “strangers” and ended with a group of kindred spirits. We laughed together, cried together, supported each other. As we continue to hear divisive, hateful language based on stereotypes, curanderismo is so needed. As a Latina the language repeated every day scares me. People cheering for construction of walls makes me sad and out of place. This fear can lead to suspicion and resentment. When we participate in curanderismo workshops, the community starts to heal. We remember that we are part of one community and we all suffer together and can heal together. It is a beautiful concept.” (cont.)

LESSONS LEARNED (cont.)

► **NOW WHAT?** Catalyst will continue to support the role of cultural healing practices as a component of self-care and community healing. We believe this is a powerful “entry point” to the work that will be shared widely. For example, we are beginning a relationship in the African Diaspora to expand access to Bantu Healing Drum as a cultural strength and healing art grounded in the experiences of many African immigrants.

4. **Networks are expanding our work.** Networks are emerging across early adopter community-based organizations involved with multiple areas of Catalyst work (e.g. convenings, trainings, seed grants).

► **NOW WHAT?** Our 2016 Seed Grantee Convening set the stage for identifying and nurturing “smart networks” of practitioners who are sustainable beyond the initial Catalyst investment. Our role will be to connect, encourage and monitor how these networks become established and/or become communities of practice. We’ve captured a few minutes of that convening in a video for you to see first-hand how powerful these conversations can be: <http://www.georgefamilyfoundation.org/catalyst-initiative/news-resources/digital-stories>



CONCLUSIONS

In twelve months, the Catalyst Initiative has demonstrated how a focus on IHH at the grassroots level powerfully impacts individuals, community-based organizations and community health outcomes. It is important to note that we intentionally focused on identifying and working with partners where sufficient energy for IHH was already present (early adopters).

Common characteristics of these partners have started to emerge and are vital to success. They include: strong community leadership, willingness to build a base of support, ability to foster networks, and cultural integrity in what IHH practices are proposed or taught. One organization that benefited from multiple “touch points” with Catalyst is the Minnesota Women Veterans Initiative. They were deeply influenced by trainings, made critical connections at convenings, and leveraged a small seed grant to expand impact:

“Because of Catalyst things are happening at light speed for us. We received a grant to do strategic planning and we are working with a mentor making a business plan. It’s so exciting to be part of this incredible momentum because you saw our value. Thank you for empowering our community to take healing into our own hands and for believing in us.”

To date, this focus has translated into hundreds of individuals and dozens of organizations influencing social norms by modeling pro-active self-care, embedding these activities into organizational life, and beginning to reach out into their wider community to fundamentally shift the focus of health and wellbeing from a reactive, disease-care position to an empowered, preventive stance.



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Our Catalytic Strategies

A catalyst is an event or person enabling and inspiring others to take action that brings about change. In 2015 our work as a catalyst clustered in the following overlapping areas.

ACT AS A NETWORK CONNECTOR

- ▶ 6 presentations by the director of Catalyst regarding wellness and IHH reached 550 individuals from the health care sector, law enforcement, the advocacy community and the academic community.
- ▶ Extensive outreach by the director of Catalyst via one-to-one meetings, participation at community meetings and membership on committees.

PROVIDE SKILL BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ 153 hours of training provided to 276 participants from 17 organizations by the Center for Mind Body Medicine in partnership with Catalyst.
- ▶ 82% of the participants report the CMBM training made a moderate or significant contribution to increasing their knowledge of mind-body practices.

IGNITE NEW ENERGY VIA CONVENINGS

- ▶ Catalyst hosted 6 convenings focused on wellbeing and healing from trauma involving 907 participants.
- ▶ 82% of participants at the convenings facilitated by Marnita's Table report they met someone across race, class or culture with whom they intend to work, collaborate or stay in touch.
- ▶ Catalyst partnered with Silos to Circles/Citizens League, Women's Foundation of MN and the Africa Press to host an additional 4 convenings focused on community-identified health issues involving more than 505 participants.
- ▶ Catalyst partnered with the Applied Zen Institute to offer 2 60/40 stance trainings involving 48 participants, seeding the creation of a community of practice.

CREATE MEANINGFUL ENTRY POINTS TO THE WORK

- ▶ Catalyst awarded one-year seed grants to 22 organizations involved with various health-related issues such as historic and vicarious trauma, chronic pain and disease, as well as promoting self-care as a core competency within diverse communities including the LGBTQ, Latino, Somali and African American populations.
- ▶ Grantees have launched a range of activities including regularly meeting Tai Ji chi groups, classes in traditional healing practices, leadership groups for Somali woman in Mind Body Medicine, certification of community members as Center for Mind Body Medicine trainers and much more.

CREATE FEEDBACK & LEARNING LOOPS TO ACCELERATE CHANGE

- ▶ In 2015, 1,773 unique individuals visited the Catalyst webpage.
- ▶ A two-minute Catalyst Highlight video was produced. Work began on additional video stories for social media outreach. 8 media pieces on Catalyst were produced. Catalyst and its partners began planning for nurturing communities of practice in 2016.