Roles of Engagement

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS FOR PHILANTHROPIC-
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS IN POLICY REFORM

BY LEILA FIESTER

atlas LEARNING PROJECT

ABOUT THE ATLAS LEARNING PROJECT

The Atlas Learning Project is a three-year effort coordinated by the Center for Evaluation Innovation to synthesize and strategically communicate lessons from the advocacy and policy change efforts that The Atlantic Philanthropies and other funders have supported in the U.S. The project's goal is to help push philanthropy and advocacy in bolder and more effective directions. To learn more, go to atlaslearning.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leila Fiester is an independent writer, researcher, and editor based in Frederick, MD, who specializes in social issues, initiatives, policies, and philanthropic practice. She helps foundations and organizations plan, assess, and describe their strategies; synthesize and explain research findings; frame concepts in an actionable context; analyze and improve practices and outcomes; distill lessons and implications; and share their stories.

Foreword

Our founder Chuck Feeney charged The Atlantic Philanthropies with building opportunity and making lasting improvements in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. He also wanted his wealth used to make a difference in his lifetime, to address urgent problems before they become more entrenched. That often meant taking on expansive, sometimes expensive challenges, while being both strategic and opportunistic. These priorities and Chuck's limited-life, Giving While Living approach to philanthropy have consistently informed our grantmaking choices.

Atlantic's work has often involved, even required, engaging directly or behind the scenes with national and local governments around the world—in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Australia, Viet Nam, South Africa, Bermuda, Cuba, and the United States. Often, to effect policy and lasting systems change, we supported grantees who worked with or challenged government to do more, or better. These complementary roles and diverse contexts required drawing on an array of strategies and tactics—planning, co-funding/matching, advocacy, incubation, innovation, evaluating effectiveness and promoting accountability to the people.

So that others might learn from our experiences, we asked independent author Leila Fiester to examine the different ways Atlantic engaged with government to achieve common goals. Which strategies and tactics worked? Which didn't? What obstacles did we, our grantees, and government colleagues encounter?

Fiester's analysis is presented in two documents: *Roles of Engagement* and *Reflections on Engagement*. Collectively, they point to some key lessons for funders as well as for government officials, advocates, and service providers in how to engage governments in creating and reforming systems to meet the needs of all citizens.

For funders and new profit leaders—to see new possibilities to effect lasting improvements through government, to help government set policy, shape practice, allocate resources, and protect rights.

For government officials—to see philanthropy as a potential partner in exploring and developing new approaches, leveraging additional support and expertise, and upholding their public trust.

For scholars and students—to understand the complex dynamics and practices reflected in Atlantic's experiences in working with government, both key successes and persistent challenges.

With deep gratitude to all our funder, grantee, and government partners,

Christopher G. Oechsli
President and CEO, The Atlantic Philanthropies

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Snapshot of Geographies Included in this Study

BERMUDA

From 1992–2013, Atlantic invested over $28 million to strengthen nonprofit organizations, build capacity for advocacy and social change, and improve philanthropic practices in Bermuda. Founder Chuck Feeney established The Atlantic Foundation, the first and largest of his philanthropies, in Bermuda a few years after relocating his family there. For the first two and a half decades, Atlantic's grantmaking was "sporadic and opportunistic," mainly responding to requests from organizations with ties to board members. Atlantic designated a staff member in New York to oversee the work in Bermuda in 2006, and grantmaking increased—mainly helping to build the capacities of nonprofit and philanthropic organizations that served children, youth, and elderly people. Atlantic also fostered collaboration among nonprofits to make services more sustainable.

In 2009, Atlantic hired Myra Virgil, a Bermudian who had directed Bermuda's Department of Human Affairs, to oversee local grantmaking. Bermuda had become one of the most expensive countries to live in in the world, and wide disparities existed between rich and poor residents. Virgil led a growing focus on public policy changes to reduce those inequities, aiming also to build leadership and organizational capacity for ongoing advocacy and social change. Atlantic engaged with Bermuda's government in several ways:

- An Atlantic-commissioned report on the numbers and consequences of young black men dropping out of school contributed to new government designs for youth development programs and partnerships with industry to provide work placement opportunities. To further improve educational outcomes, the government tightened teacher certification and licensing laws.

- Advocates funded by Atlantic led grassroots campaigns to win new policy prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and drafted anti-discrimination legislation that Bermuda's government passed in 2013.

- An Atlantic grantee brought nonprofit and government leaders together to learn about policies affecting ageing populations, and another grantee developed a positive ageing strategy for the country. In 2012, the government created a ministry for health and seniors.

- Atlantic established a Coalition for Community Activism to work toward a more transparent government. Following public forums organized by the coalition, the government passed a Public Access to Information Act.

SOURCE: _THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES IN BERMUDA: 1992–2013_

NORTHERN IRELAND

From 1991–2014, Atlantic invested nearly $570 million to institutionalize the peace agreement in Northern Ireland. Atlantic's involvement here was driven by Chuck Feeney's desire to "help build a lasting, sustainable peace and to reconcile deeply divided communities." Relying at first on personal connections to quietly gain access to top officials, Feeney helped to foster communication between the governments of Northern Ireland and the United States. Then, beginning in 1991, Atlantic began giving grants in Northern Ireland to cultivate dialogue across communities and to support the most marginalized groups in the most conflict-ridden areas in finding peace and reconciliation. Over the next 23 years, Atlantic engaged with Northern Ireland's government in the following ways:

- Atlantic funded physical improvements to universities in Belfast and Ulster and then partnered with the Northern Ireland government to create the Support Programme for University Research (SPUR), an initiative that built universities' capacity to conduct high-quality research. These efforts leveraged $220 million (beyond Atlantic and government's $150 million investment) for university infrastructure and research.

- Groups supported by Atlantic promoted community restorative justice as an alternative to extra-legal civil order imposed by paramilitaries, which typically involved beatings, shootings, and expulsions from the community as punishment. After initially opposing the change on the grounds that it might undermine the traditional justice system, the government was persuaded to fund the restorative justice organizations.

- Atlantic supported integrated education (in which Protestant and Catholic children are educated together) and shared education (in which schools collaborate to provide both education and reconciliation benefits to children, families, and the community). The government now helps to fund these models, and the number of children educated in integrated schools and preschools has tripled.

- Nonprofits funded by Atlantic have challenged the government on human rights issues, held it accountable for commitments, and used public interest litigation to improve rights for vulnerable and marginalized populations.

- Advocates funded by Atlantic have identified and campaigned for policies to support healthy aging, leading to the creation of the Northern Ireland Pensioners' Parliament and the Age Sector Platform, which give the older population a voice and leverage with the government. Researchers funded by Atlantic contributed knowledge to support policy change, including a longitudinal study on aging.

- Atlantic's grants to raise awareness and improve treatment for dementia led to the development of the Northern Ireland government's Dementia Strategy and an advocacy network that develops standards used by state health and social care agencies. A partnership between Atlantic and the government is embedding good practices for dementia care in Northern Ireland.

- Nonprofits funded by Atlantic designed, implemented, evaluated, and advocated for prevention and early intervention services for children and youth. With support from government, some of those programs are being taken to scale.

SOURCE: *THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND: 1991–2014*

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

From 1987–2015, Atlantic invested $1.2 billion to advance higher education, human rights, and services for young people and older adults in the Republic of Ireland. Beginning in the mid-1980s, for three decades Atlantic's grantmaking focused on "stimulating a knowledge economy by reinvigorating the higher education system, protecting and expanding human and civil rights, [and] transforming the design and delivery of services for children, older adults, and people with disabilities." These efforts were complicated by economic turmoil and a lack of philanthropic infrastructure in the Republic of Ireland. Atlantic engaged with the Republic of Ireland's government in these ways:

- Atlantic began investing in the physical development of Ireland's higher education infrastructure because of Chuck Feeney's belief that university education could transform lives. Feeney's relationship with Ed Walsh, head of the then Limerick Institute of Higher Education, provided an avenue for engaging government in the effort. Walsh persuaded the government to match Atlantic's grant for an advanced research and cultural facility that became the University of Limerick, and other grants followed.

- To further improve graduate-level education, Atlantic developed the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLI). This involved direct negotiation with the government, conducted through the chairman of Ireland's Higher Education Authority. Atlantic contributed $262 million, or 30 percent of the cost, for PRTLI's first three cycles; government contributed more than $1 billion and continues to invest in PRTLI.

- To improve services and supports for the ageing population, Atlantic supported a new institute for ageing; the first longitudinal study of ageing in Ireland; the country's first center for social gerontology; community-based health and other services; hospice facilities and programs that trained almost 3,000 hospital staff; dementia research and services; and a network of executives from government, business, and civil society that developed policies, services, and structures that enable older people to age actively in their communities. The government co-funded many of these efforts and mainstreamed funding for some of them.

- To establish and grow high-quality prevention and early intervention services for children, Atlantic funded a demonstration involving 52 programs, touching 90,000 children and young people and 24,000 parents or caregivers; evaluators funded by Atlantic and government measured the results. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Atlantic jointly launched a Center for Effective Services that supports service providers and policymakers in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In 2011, the government created a separate Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which prioritized prevention and early intervention.

- To strengthen the human rights infrastructure and improve access to justice for disadvantaged groups, advocates funded by Atlantic provided legal advice clinics, pursued test cases, and developed reports that informed the United Nations' accountability monitors. Advocates mobilized to reduce the negative impact when government cut funding for the country's two major human rights agencies. Following advocacy by Atlantic grantees on behalf of prisoners, the government created an Office for Inspector of Prisons and a prisoner complaints system. Advocacy groups supported by Atlantic played major roles in passage of the Civil Partnership act of 2010, Marriage Equality in 2015, and the Gender Recognition Bill of 2015. Grantees developed the research and legislative base for policy reforms giving people with cognitive disabilities more authority over decision making, and supported hundreds of projects giving personalized support to people with disabilities—an approach that is being mainstreamed through a new Social Reform Fund established in the Health Service Executive with joint funding from Atlantic and the government. Migrant rights groups funded by Atlantic successfully advocated for policy changes that allowed parents of Irish-born children to remain in the country, stopped plans to restrict work permits for migrants, and provided frontline services to migrants.

SOURCE: *THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: 1987–2014*

SOUTH AFRICA

From 1991–2015, Atlantic invested nearly $357 million to advance justice, equality, education and health in South Africa's emerging democracy. When apartheid ended in the early 1990s, South Africa's new democratic government was nearly bankrupt, with little money for social services. Harvey Dale, Atlantic's founding president, was interested in supporting black lawyers to advance the rights guaranteed by the new Constitution, which was progressive but not yet implemented. For the next decade, Atlantic supported efforts to build and fortify the new legal system, solidify the role of nonprofits and community-based organizations in advancing Constitutional rights, and help colleges and universities serve more disadvantaged, non-white students. In 2001, when Atlantic became a limited-life institution, the work in South Africa was refocused on reconciliation and human rights—a natural outgrowth of democracy-building efforts—and population health, which offered a way to improve equity while also meeting the needs of older people, children, and youth. Atlantic engaged with South Africa's government in several ways:

- To improve the quality of higher education for historically disadvantaged South Africans, Atlantic invested in a new facility at the University of the Western Cape, which housed several research centers; this grant required and received a match from the country's Department of Education, ending a 15-year moratorium on government investment in infrastructure for higher education. The government subsequently began to pay more attention to education infrastructure, spending more than $800 million on new and refurbished school buildings.

- Atlantic established the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town, a research and advocacy organization that influenced South African policy on children's health, rights, and well-being.

- Advocates funded by Atlantic led a successful public awareness and litigation campaign to force the government to give HIV-infected mothers access to treatment that prevents transmission of the virus to their unborn children, and the perinatal trans-mission rate dropped from 8.5 percent to 2.7 percent. This

activism also produced a dramatic drop in the price of anti-retroviral medications and raised the number of people receiving HIV/AIDS treatment though public health care from zero to 2 million within less than 10 years.

- Advocates funded by Atlantic led legal challenges to protect or enforce rights for the most marginalized citizens, including those living in informal settlements, people with HIV/AIDS, the LGBT community, the rural elderly, and immigrants and refugees. For example, advocates persuaded the Constitutional Court to rule that city government could not evict people from unauthorized settlements without providing an alternative place to live and to strike down a law that would have barred women living in communal areas from owning or inheriting land. The Lesbian and Gay Equality Project used public litigation to build up case law supporting same-sex marriage; the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of gay marriage in 2005, and the South African government legalized it in 2006.

- Four universities used $22.9 million in Atlantic funds to improve the physical infrastructure, research capacities, and enrollments of their schools of public health. The Kaiser Family Foundation and Atlantic sponsored a study trip to Brazil for South Africa's minister of health, eight provincial ministers, and several senior government leaders; the government subsequently re-designed its primary health care program based on what participants had learned. Results included adoption of the first national "road map" for nursing; a 44% increase in the number of nurses; a new government position of Chief Nursing Officer; and a $120 million government commitment to develop nursing colleges, house nursing students, and establish a health leadership training institute.

SOURCE: THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES IN SOUTH AFRICA: 1991–2013

UNITED STATES

From 1982–2016, Atlantic invested $3.1 billion to bolster universities and medical research, expand health care, support children and older adults, and protect rights in the United States. A small amount of this grantmaking involved co-funding with government, but grants were more likely to involve policy advocacy and campaigns, development of legislation, demonstration programs and research to generate knowledge, collaboration with government leaders to frame issues and solutions, civic engagement, capacity building within the advocacy sector, and litigation. Atlantic engaged with government in the United States in several ways:

- Advocates funded by Atlantic helped to protect Social Security from proposed cuts, reverse a proposed increase in eligibility for Medicare benefits, recover $7.5 billion in unclaimed benefits for low-income individuals, restore $50 million in lost pensions, and engage older people to fight for new models of health care.

- Advocacy grantees led a grassroots campaign that helped to win passage of the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA).

- Advocacy and nonprofit grantee organizations worked with local school districts and public health agencies to provide high-quality school-based health services to children and their families.

- Advocacy grantees catalyzed thousands of Americans to advocate for immigration policy reform.

- Advocacy grantees worked to abolish the death penalty, resulting in: The U.S. Supreme Court striking down the juvenile death penalty; a 52% decline in executions and a 61% decline in death sentences; and a 50% reduction in the number of states that perform executions.

- Advocates funded by Atlantic led campaigns ton increase awareness of discriminatory school discipline policies, leading to greater federal support for reforms that help schools implement alternatives, more state- and local-level reforms to improve school climate and discipline, and a growing culture of cross-agency collaboration on the issue; researchers funded by Atlantic contributed key information and analyses.

- Advocates improved racial and criminal justice by winning a federal court ruling that the New York City Police Department's "Stop and Frisk" practice violated Constitutional protections, a New York City law that provides extra oversight of police and expands residents' ability to sue over racial profiling, and a California ballot initiative to reduce incarceration levels and penalties for non-violent low-level crimes.

SOURCE: HTTP://WWW.ATLANTICPHILANTHROPIES.ORG/REGIONS/UNITED-STATES

VIET NAM

From 1998–2013, Atlantic invested $381.5 million—and leveraged $734.6 million from governments and other donors—to improve libraries, universities, and public health in Viet Nam. The country had experienced more than a decade of rapid economic growth and political and social change by the time Atlantic made its first investment in Vietnam, in 1998. At the same time, basic public infrastructure and services, especially in health care for poor and rural citizens, were underfunded and inadequate; the higher education system also faced major challenges. After Chuck Feeney read about the efforts of the East Meets West Foundation to improve health and welfare for poor Vietnamese, he began funding the foundation. Initial grants supported capital projects to improve education, but beginning in 2002 the grantmaking shifted to population health. Atlantic engaged with government in Viet Nam in several ways:

- Atlantic funded the establishment of a new, foreign-owned university in Ho Chi Minh City, bringing "world-class professional education and practical training to the higher education system and students in Viet Nam."

- Four major regional universities in the country used Atlantic funds to design, build, and launch Learning Resource Centers.

- The Ha Noi School of Public Health used Atlantic's investments of about $11 million—and an additional $60 million leveraged from the government—to develop a public health infrastructure including buildings, curriculum, faculty, organizational development, fundraising, public education, and advocacy.

- Atlantic funded the construction of hospitals and health facilities across Viet Nam. More than 800 local health centers used Atlantic funds to provide primary health care to more than 9 million people.

- Advocates funded by Atlantic, working with other partners, secured legislation that requires all motorbike drivers and passengers to wear helmets, which reduced related deaths by 12% and injuries by 24% in the first year; and established a sustainable mechanism for tobacco control programs, with funds from a tobacco tax.

- Grantees helped to develop the first competency standards for nurse training and win approved by the Ministry of Health.

- Atlantic and its grantees secured a $100 million government commitment to develop the social work profession, in addition to the national scale-up of a training model for community-based primary health doctors.

- Grantees implemented a network of community-based mental health services, with 10 years of government funding.

- Grassroots organizations used Atlantic funds to address domestic violence, ageing, drug abuse, disabilities, and mental illness.

SOURCE: *THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES IN VIET NAM: 1998–2013*

NOTES:

1. Monetary amounts reflect total money spent in each country, including grants that did not include government engagement.
2. The Atlantic Philanthropies also invested in Australia and Cuba. Apart from sidebars on pp. 15 and 46, however, we do not feature those countries extensively in this monograph because engagement with government in them was more limited.

Introduction

The morning of December 15, 2007, dawned much as it did on any other Saturday in the streets of Ha Noi. Shop-keepers opened their stalls and began trading. Café owners served up breakfasts of sticky rice and banh mi. People gathered in parks to practice Tai Chi. And the roads began to fill with many of the 2 million bicycles and motorbikes that transport residents through this vibrant city. But something was dramatically different that day, something so widely visible and potentially life-changing that it amazed observers. On this first day of Viet Nam's brand-new mandatory helmet law, every single rider was wearing protective headgear. Not one person, from the oldest to the youngest, failed to comply.

The sea of helmets capped 16 years of effort by local and national government authorities and, over time, philanthropic and nonprofit partners to address Viet Nam's high rates of injury and death from traffic accidents. In a nation with 21 million motorcycles, traffic accidents were causing 14,000 deaths per year—2,000 of them among children—and 30,000 cases of severe brain damage.[1] The new law built on a series of smaller successes won by philanthropic and nonprofit organizations working with champions within and outside Viet Nam's government, including the head of the country's National Traffic Safety Committee, the U.S. Ambassador, and Viet Nam's Prime Minister. Together, these allies cultivated political will for the change; conducted extensive public education and outreach; commissioned research to assess the scope of the problem; mobilized decision makers across the public and corporate sectors; produced helmets appropriate to Viet Nam's tropical climate; and advocated for passage of the law. A year after the law took effect, traffic-related deaths had fallen by 12 percent and injuries by 24 percent.[2]

Vietnam's story of collaboration between the public, private, and philanthropic sectors is noteworthy but not unique. In fact, the practice

of philanthropy engaging with government (i.e., elected representatives, appointed officials and the leaders and staff of public agencies and programs) to improve the infrastructure, systems, services, policies, and practices that affect outcomes for vulnerable people was deeply embedded in The Atlantic Philanthropies' 34-year history of working in Australia, Bermuda, Cuba, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, and the United States in addition to Vietnam. It began just five years after Irish-American businessman Chuck Feeney established The Atlantic Philanthropies, when the foundation made a major co-investment with government in the Republic of Ireland to build physical infrastructure for higher education. The success of that informal arrangement, which stemmed from Feeney's interest in making higher education more accessible and his personal connection to top government officials, laid the basis for more numerous and formal engagements between Atlantic and government to improve opportunities and outcomes for children, youth, older adults, people with dementia, and others in the Republic of Ireland. As Atlantic's work grew to include $7.5 billion of philanthropy across eight countries, engagements with government became a centerpiece of strategies used by Atlantic's donor and staff, a constant factor in their successes and challenges, and ultimately a cornerstone of Atlantic's efforts to wind down grant-making softly and responsibly.

This monograph is one of two documents describing and analyzing Atlantic's experiences engaging with government, all told through the lens of Atlantic's perspective:

- *Roles of Engagement* provides the big-picture argument for why government relations are important and what they involve by describing the overarching strategies and tactics Atlantic used to establish, cultivate, and deploy global government relations and the strategic (as opposed to practical) implications of Atlantic's approaches. This narrative captures an array of approaches and experiences across geographies, some of which worked well in one geography but not in others. It is most useful to consider *Roles of Engagement* an inventory or landscape scan of possible approaches and their relative merits in various situations, rather than a how-to guide for government-philanthropic engagement in general.

- *Reflections on Engagement* is a learning brief, distilled from the first document's landscape scan. Lessons are organized around five fundamental aspects of engagement that emerged as particularly important: contextual factors, relationships, skills and capacities, strategies, and scale and sustainability.

Both documents were written by independent consultant Leila Fiester, based on interviews conducted in 2016 with over two dozen Atlantic staff, grantees, evaluators, and former government representatives. We offer these reports as part of Atlantic's commitment to reflecting on its experiences and sharing lessons from them with others. Our goal is to help people in philanthropy and government—individual donors and their advisors, foundation leaders and staff, elected officials, and the leaders and staff of public systems and agencies—become less skeptical, more appreciative, and better informed of what mutual engagement can accomplish for both sectors and for the populations that both serve.

Unlike some case studies, *Roles of Engagement* does not tell the complete story of any one engagement or set of engagements within a country. Rather, it synthesizes elements from many different types of engagement that, collectively, illustrate a comprehensive body of work. The "case" in this study is not what happened in a particular place or around a particular topic but the cross-cutting story of how many different kinds of philanthropic-government engagement, supported by one foundation and conducted by its grantees, influenced the outcomes of a social-change agenda, and what implications those results hold for efforts by other philanthropies and governments to achieve similar goals.

In this monograph and its companion, we interpret the word "engagement" broadly, reflecting the fact that interaction between private funders and the public sector is a multifaceted process. It can involve formal partnerships; informal alliances; one-on-one, direct relationships between individuals; and indirect influence through partners, coalitions, nonprofits, and non-governmental organizations that advocate, mobilize, support, and apply pressure. It can involve working with or against government, and working to change something over which government has authority or working to change the way government itself "thinks" and operates. It can advance the will of the few who hold power, or it can amplify the voices of the many and the marginalized. It occurs at the city, state or

province, and national or country levels. It can involve many different roles for philanthropy in relation to government: partner, co-funder, collaborator, connecter, innovator, supporter, challenger, and more. And it occurs through multiple strategies and actions: policy advocacy, legislative or administrative reforms, efforts to build physical infrastructure and human capacities, research into unmet needs and their costs, and demonstration projects to spur investment in successful responses. Atlantic has deployed many of these strategies, approaches, and roles to engage government in ensuring that public systems and services respond to the needs of all people, including the most vulnerable.

Similarly, we recognize a great deal of variation within the term "advocacy," which is a theme in much of the engagement described here. Interviews conducted for this study revealed that some people view advocacy primarily as an activity in which philanthropy and its grantees oppose government, and they position advocacy on the other end of the spectrum from partnership. (Atlantic has published reports that delve into one or the other; for example, see Philanthropy Working with Government: A Case Study of The Atlantic Philanthropies' Partnership with the Irish Government and Advocacy, Politics & Philanthropy: A Reflection on a Decade of Immigration Reform Advocacy.) Other interviewees, however,

Key Components of Engagement
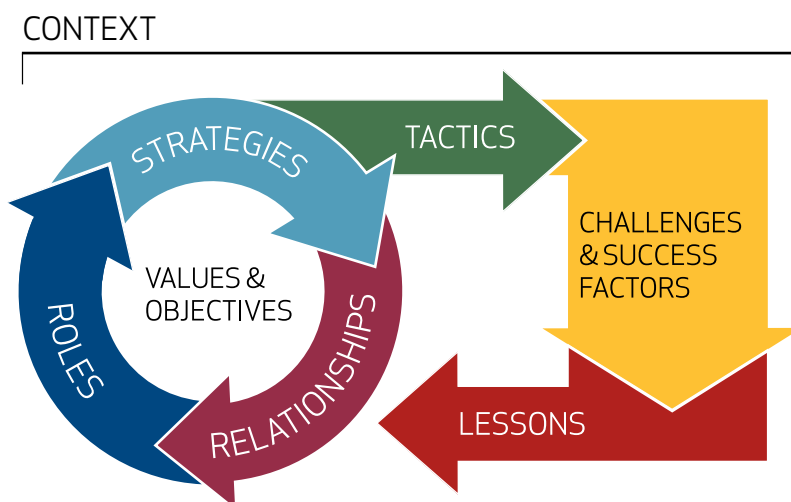
Values and objectives lie at the core of decisions about relationships, roles, and strategies. Relationships occur on a spectrum and are shaped by values. Roles are selected to reflect the relationships. Values, relationships, and roles determine the selection of strategies. Ideally, engagement involves a combination of strategies rather than just one.

Strategies are implemented through tactics, which can be hindered by challenges or advanced by success factors. Lessons are derived from challenges, solutions, and the results they produce. Knowledge from lessons can be applied to improve relationships, roles, strategies, and tactics. All of these components of engagement are influenced by context.

view advocacy as a broader set of actions designed to generate broad understanding and support, and therefore as a technique that can go hand in hand with partnership. In this study, we view advocacy broadly as encompassing research and dissemination, communication to raise awareness, and community organizing as well as grassroots mobilization, lobbying, and litigation, and as something that is not mutually exclusive with government partnership.

In part because of this variation in experiences and definitions, *Roles of Engagement* is organized not around a single storyline but around some key categories of engagement and learning, all of which are influenced by the context in which philanthropy and government operate:

- **Strategies:** the underlying and overarching high-level plans for achieving Atlantic's goals;

- **Tactics:** the actions, methods, and approaches used to implement strategies;

- **Challenges:** the tensions, obstacles, and potential pitfalls of philanthropic-government engagement;

- **Solutions and success factors:** actions and qualities that work to avoid, counteract, or overcome the challenges.

We hope that this modular approach enables many different types of readers to find the information and examples that are most relevant to their own needs and experiences.

Chapter 2: Overview of Philanthropic-Government Engagement creates a basis for understanding the topic by summarizing current thinking in the fields of philanthropy and public policy, outlining Atlantic's rationale and values for government engagement, and examining two features of engagement that shape and are shaped by strategies: relationships and roles. This chapter helps readers consider:

- What is the goal or target of engagement?

- How does context affect engagement?

- What type of philanthropic-government relationship works for this goal and context(s)?

- What mix of roles are required?

FIVE QUESTIONS GUIDED THIS STUDY:

What are the different ways in which Atlantic worked with governments to achieve goals (i.e., strategies and tactics)?

How did Atlantic's core values and principles play out in the relationships with government—how were they incorporated, reinforced, managed or co-managed, challenged, and refined?

What tensions are involved in relationships between philanthropy and government, and how can partners resolve them successfully (i.e., challenges and solutions)?

How do contextual factors (e.g., local needs, political contexts, type of government and philanthropic community) influence these relationships and their outcomes?

What do Atlantic's experiences with government relations imply for other funders (i.e., lessons)?

In *Chapter 3: Engagement in Action*, we explore the strategies and tactics that lead to results, as well as the factors that affect them. This chapter helps readers consider:

- What challenges are likely to occur during engagement?

- What solutions or other factors should be built in to achieve success?

We end in *Chapter 4: Concluding Thoughts* with a synthesis of big-picture observations distilled from the study suggesting ways in which the experiences described here might shape roles, relationships, strategies, and tactics for philanthropic-government engagement going forward.

CHAPTER 2

Overview Of Philantropic-Government Engagement

Perspectives on whether and how philanthropies and governments should engage with each other are as varied as the examples of engagement itself. A 2012 review of research on U.S. public-private partnerships, published by the Council on Foundations, traces the growth of such engagements during the first decade of the 21st century and notes that philanthropic-government engagements occur along a "continuum of collaboration," with relationships becoming more formally structured and implementation strategies more closely aligned as one moves across the continuum. [3/A] The authors highlight "tension between enthusiasm and apprehension" in these collaborations: Critics worry about maintaining philanthropic independence, "politicizing" philanthropy, favoring large urban foundations over small rural ones, offloading public responsibilities to the private arena,[4] and the potential for cultural clashes between the two sectors.[5] Some people fear that private entities with little public account-ability might have undue, undemocratic influence on government. Others worry about the revolving door between philanthropy and government, noting that concerns about the appropriateness of philanthropy's role can distract from policy reform debates.[6] And the relationships are not always harmonious, especially when philanthropy supports the more oppositional forms of advocacy, such as litigation against a government policy or practice.

Proponents of engagement, however, believe the benefits can be "substantial," including learning, minimized duplication,[7] and opportunities to leverage and scale social change. After all, government has a role in solving social problems in all countries, although the exact nature and intensity of the role varies.

"Government is an important audience, partner, and sustainer for a lot of the work we do," says Atlantic CEO Christopher Oechsli:[8]

> If you want to leverage resources and effect change, you have to work with government to magnify and sustain the effort….Philanthropic investment, if done right, can be a force multiplier [that] not only strengthens communities and leadership, enhances rights and social services, and offers opportunities to the disadvantaged [but] also provides space—both physical and conceptual—to live, imagine, innovate, invent, and learn.

In recent years, the role played by philanthropy in these engagements has expanded beyond that of government's R&D unit, funder to fill gaps in services, or "venture capitalist for public problem solving" to include providing resources, expertise, and connections to their networks to address problems locally, statewide, or regionally, and at the federal or national level.[9] That evolution has increasingly surfaced the cultural differences between government and philanthropy, from the difference in timelines for change (short for government, long for philanthropy) to variations in comfort with public decision making and risk. A 2015 literature review on policy change in the public sector, by a faculty member at Ulster University's Institute for Research in Social Sciences, uncovered several other contextual factors that influence when and how philanthropies and government join forces to change policies, including: leadership abilities and pressures within government; academic and media coverage of the engagement (whether positive or negative); political factionalism that may interfere with doing "what is best for [the country as a whole"; and the need to share power.[10]

Atlantic's perspective on engagement is shaped by three overarching objectives, all of which would be difficult (if not impossible) to pursue without engaging with government in some way: (1) promoting and enhancing opportunities for people, especially in places where systemic barriers, bias, and discrimination unfairly hold them back; (2) addressing the root causes of inequity rather than the symptoms; and (3) challenging and changing destructive and discriminatory practices and public narratives.

Those objectives align with Atlantic Founder Chuck Feeney's principles, which emphasize personal engagement, modesty, pragmatism, and high-value investments. Feeney also believes in taking risks by making large

investments—big bets[B]—where they are most needed to capitalize on significant opportunities for solving urgent problems in the present so they are less likely to become larger, more entrenched, and more expensive challenges in the future. During much of the period covered by this study, those personal principles were reflected in institutional values that can be expressed as follows:

- Foster lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

- Listen to the voices of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, and reflect their perspectives in strategies and initiatives.

- Build institutions and leaders in the fields and regions of focus.

- Make use of the philanthropy's ability to support vigorous advocacy for policy changes.

- View the challenge of spending down assets as an opportunity to take educated risks.

- Recognize the importance of transparency and public communications about the philanthropy's practices, values, and learning.

These values and objectives led Atlantic to engage with government in many ways. Before looking at specific strategies, however, it is useful to understand the variety of roles and relationships that philanthropic-government engagement can involve, the challenges faced, and the factors that can make engagement most successful.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ABOUT VALUES AND OBJECTIVES**

What do we want to achieve, and for whom?

What values—personal and institutional—drive our goals?

Based on our values, can our goals and objectives be better achieved with or without engaging with government (or philanthropy)?

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PHILANTHROPY AND GOVERNMENT

Good ideas and evidence alone do not ensure change, especially in public policies and practices. More often, change occurs either when the relevant parties co-create solutions together or one party pushes the other to change the status quo. Both pathways require having relationships at the personal and institutional levels, not only between philanthropy and government but also between government and the many individuals and organizations through which philanthropy works, including advocates, nonprofit and non-governmental leaders and their organizations, and other grantees.
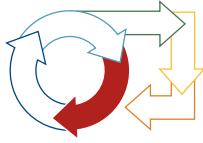
One reason for choosing a specific grantee or partner may be that the individual or organization already has a relationship with a government official or agency—a link that provides "the connective tissue" to government, explains Annmarie Benedict, who led Atlantic's work in the United States to abolish the death penalty. At other times, the philanthropy's staff or donor leverage their own cachet and access to build that connectivity. Either way, long-term public-private relationships can help pave the way for new engagements. For example, Northern Ireland's shared education program has only been operating for a few years, but it builds on five to 10 years of prior advocacy and partnership by Atlantic's grantees, donor, and staff that created relationships and established reliable partnerships. And in the Republic of Ireland, Atlantic's successful partnership with government on the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI), a capacity-building initiative in higher education, "proved that we were serious, steadfast, would work through any issues that arose, were respectful of constraints on the public sector, and were not going to run to the media with every issue," says Mary Sutton, Atlantic's country director for the Republic of Ireland. "So when we came into ageing, human rights, and children's services we had that good track record."

Of course, relationships are a double-edged sword: A very close relationship between government and philanthropy—for example, involving a person who has recently moved from one arena to the other—can create perceptions of impropriety, even if all interactions are transparent and ethical. And if relationships turn sour, they can taint future efforts to engage on new issues. Naomi Post, former head of Atlantic's community-based programs, recalls walking into the office of a major U.S. city's school superintendent to talk about the Elev8 full-service community schools program. The superintendent's first words to Post were, "I never want to work with your grantee again." It turned out that a nonprofit advocacy group hired by Atlantic had antagonized the superintendent during a previous engagement by holding a demonstration outside his home. Before Post could secure the official's support, she first had to repair the rift in the relationship.

The literature on philanthropic-government relationships describes a continuum of possible relationships.[c] The engagements examined for this study included formal partnerships, informal alliances, direct relationships, and indirect relationships.

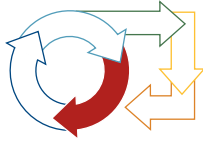**TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS**

Formal partnership

Informal alliance

Direct interaction between representatives of philanthropy and government

Indirect interaction between government and philanthropy via grantees

[c] See, for example: *Working with Government: Guidance for Grantmakers* and *Maximizing the Value of Philanthropic Efforts Through Planned Partnerships Between the US Government and Private Foundations.*

FORMAL PARTNERSHIP

A partnership typically involves joint decision making, co-funding,ᴰ information sharing, and coordination of effort. This type of relationship is especially desirable when one of the goals is for government to adopt, continue, or expand the change in policy or practice, because it gives government a significant stake in the outcome. In Northern Ireland, for instance, Atlantic set up a joint decision-making arrangement with the government for the Delivering Social Change initiative, which encompassed early childhood prevention and intervention services, dementia care, and shared education for Catholic and Protestant children, in which schools from different community backgrounds share classes, facilities, and teachers.

"The joint decision making allowed us to become equal participants in what was being funded," explains Colin Knox, a grantee at Ulster University who has evaluated several philanthropic initiatives and approaches. "The skill Atlantic brought to this was significant, and the money was significant, but the only way you could get the change the [advocates] had been working toward was to get government to lift it up and do it. This could only be sustainable by partnering with the system."

INFORMAL ALLIANCE

In informal alliances, philanthropic, government, and other collaborators serve "in a more flexible set of roles as thought partners, co-developers, co-learners, and persistent nudges to help other leaders and entities move forward," according to an analysis of Atlantic's school discipline reform efforts in the United States.[11] "[By] leveraging each other, the aligned partners can successfully address complex problems that require systemic solutions, which no single public- or private-sector player could accomplish on its own." For example, Atlantic, its grantees, and other philanthropies allied with public education and justice systems at the national, state, and local levels of government to define a shared goal, develop a structure for ongoing dialogue and decision making, build widespread demand and support, and ultimately change policies and practices.

DIRECT INTERACTION BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF PHILANTHROPY AND OF GOVERNMENT

Direct relationships occur when the philanthropy's founder, leaders, or staff have strong connections to individuals within government and use those connections to propel a mission, advance mutual goals, and/or
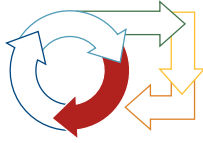
Co-funding physical infrastructure: creating new and refurbished university buildings and research centers, a prototype facility for palliative care, and an institute that provides clinical services and training in successful aging, in the Republic of Ireland; and helping to build or renovate hospitals and community health clinics in eight provinces of Viet Nam.

Systems and services: developing prevention and intervention programs for children and young people, programs that enable people with dementia to live in their own homes and remain active in their communities, and customized services for people with disabilities in Ireland—all of which were integrated into the national government's programs and strategies; and co-investing with national and provincial governments in Viet Nam to improve the health care system, including the launch of a network for community-based mental health services.

Knowledge, research, and innovation: developing and funding the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI), which turned seven universities and the Royal College of Surgeons in the Republic of Ireland into international-quality research institutions, and the Support Programme for University Research (SPUR), a similar partnership with government in Northern Ireland; and supporting a project through the U.S. Council of State Governments to build consensus on reducing exclusionary school discipline.

Human capital development: supporting programs to train and place nurses in South Africa, and co-funding with other foundations a program in the United States to train juvenile and family court judges to convene stakeholders around school discipline reform (with evaluation and expansion funding from the U.S. Department of Justice).

open the door to civic engagement and inclusion of other voices. Atlantic Philanthropies Founder Chuck Feeney's involvement in Northern Ireland peacemaking is one example: with other Irish Americans, in 1994 he worked to establish "a secret back channel of communication… linking Gerry Adams and President Clinton"; later, Feeney "negotiated directly with Sinn Féin officials on the funding for an office in Washington to promote a political alternative."[12]

Similarly, Feeney's personal relationships with university presidents and government leaders in Ireland laid the groundwork for Atlantic's first investments there in higher education. In the Republic of Ireland, the direct interaction led to a formal co-funding relationship for the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions. It also "would have been very difficult for Atlantic and the government to reach agreement, given the extent of interdepartmental cooperation needed," without the direct involvement of Dr. Don Thornhill, who was then chair of the Higher Education Authority in Dublin, according to a 2006 case study of PRTLI coauthored by Frank Rhodes and John Healy (Atlantic's former Chairman and CEO, respectively). Thornhill "was able to design and pre-test the funding model and its related assessment processes, he secured the essential commitment from the sponsoring government department…and was able to convince the Department of Finance of the benefits of Atlantic's support for basic research in Ireland."[13]

In the United States, Atlantic staff took the lead in establishing direct relationships. For example:

- To inform federal policy and funding to strengthen accountability and incentives for better school discipline policies, philanthropic staff cultivated and worked closely with allies in the federal departments of justice and education, including deputy and associate division chiefs, senior policy advisors, special assistants, and cabinet members. (In the United States, direct relationships between philanthropies and government are shaped by strict rules; see Chapter 3).

- To initiate efforts to integrate social services into community schools in New Mexico (the first Elev8 site), philanthropic staff reached out to the governor and lieutenant governor to explain the benefits of Elev8's approach. After gaining entry through those leaders,
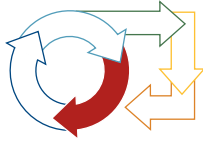
recalls Naomi Post, it was easier to form partnerships with the
department heads responsible for public health, education, and
child and youth services.

- To improve children's health insurance coverage nationwide,
  philanthropic staff reached out to long-standing contacts in the
  federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to provide
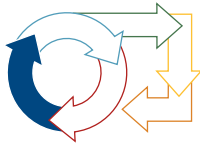 information on practices and resources to local coalitions.

It is worth noting that although the examples given here are largely
cooperative, direct relationships between philanthropy and government
can also involve conflict. The "direct" quality refers to the degree to which
representatives of the two sectors interact with each other, not to the degree
of alignment between their perspectives.

INDIRECT INTERACTION

Relationships with government, conducted through grantees, give a
philanthropy access to capacities it may not possess in-house. Frequently,
the purpose is to produce a critical mass of evidence and public will that
provides a pathway to and a lever for engaging government. Padraic
Quirk, Atlantic's country director for Northern Ireland, says that Atlantic
funded demonstration programs for some time before philanthropic staff
established a formal relationship with government. "We wanted to be in a
position to say, 'We know this works in communities.' We probably spent
five to eight years…doing the heavy lifting, demonstrating solutions, before
we even got into negotiations with government," Quirk says.

In the United States, philanthropies' support for LISC-Chicago gave funders
access to the organization's relationships with state legislators, the mayor's
office, board of county commissioners, and—through local groups—city
aldermen; LISC-Chicago leveraged these relationships to mobilize a large
number of people who cared about (and would likely vote in favor of) the
community schools initiative, Elev8. Similarly, the Center for Community
Change had long been involved in immigration reform when philanthropy
took up the issue, and the Center and other advocacy grantees handled most
of the relationships with key governmental decision makers on that issue.

The familiarity created through indirect relationships can lead to stronger
bonds between government representatives, advocates, and their funders
during times of stress, notes Richard Kirsch, former national campaign

PHILANTHOPIC ROLES

Risk taker

Developer of capacity

Catalyst, thought leader, convener, bridge

Investor in research, data, analysis, evidence

Silent partner

Challenger

Watchdog

manager of Health Care for America Now, an Atlantic grantee organization that continually organized people to meet with members of Congress and their staffs. "Interestingly, [policy makers] went from being wary of us to actually looking to us for political support when they were being attacked—they asked our state partner organizations to find people who would rally outside their offices, come to town hall meetings, and talk to the press about why health care was needed," Kirsch says.

Conversely, relationships conducted indirectly through grantees can be useful for situations in which there has been conflict between the philanthropy and government or distrust between the two sectors' representatives. In these circumstances, a relationship conducted at arm's length through a grantee can reduce friction and allow both sides to overlook past differences.

PHILANTHROPIC ROLES IN ENGAGEMENT

Within the relationships outlined here and the engagement strategies described in the next chapter, philanthropy and government can play various roles. It no longer is true that philanthropy's role is either to create programs that government will pick up or to serve as the dumping ground for things that government doesn't want to support. In addition to the role of partner and co-funder, philanthropy can serve in the following roles.

RISK TAKER

Atlantic President Christopher Oechsli describes Chuck Feeney as an "informed risk taker": the founder's admonition to think big is "an inherently risky proposition," Oechsli says. But taking risks only makes sense "when it makes sense to take a risk, not…for the sake of excitement or novelty," he advises.[14] The presence of success factors described in Chapter 3 may indicate a situation in which risk-taking makes sense, while the lack of success factors may indicate the opposite.

At a forum on philanthropy and government in 2016, Kresge Foundation President Rip Rapson described how foundations play this role in Detroit: "Philanthropy had to [assume] the first layer of risk to encourage the private sector to get involved in [revitalization]. We were called on to serve as a guarantor of value, to signal to the marketplace that Detroit was an investable proposition. We put the first money down to create a light rail system, and we encouraged other philanthropies and government to come

**TAKING AN INFORMED RISK: ADVOCACY TO NORMALIZE U.S.–CUBA RELATIONS**

From 2002 through 2016, Atlantic invested over $66 million in Cuba, mainly to improve health outcomes and to share the nation's model for providing high-quality primary health care globally. That work was highly beneficial and relatively risk-free: "By leveraging the lessons learned from Cuba's universal health system and its evolving health policies, practice, research and education, [our grantee, MEDICC] has positioned itself as a strategic bridge among Cuba, the United States and other nations, informing global health policies and practice, including Cuba's ongoing leadership in the fight to control the Ebola outbreak in West Africa," Atlantic President Chris Oechsli observed in 2015.

Atlantic took a much bigger risk in supporting advocacy aimed at normalizing relations between the United States and Cuba—and it paid off. A grant by The Atlantic Advocacy Fund to the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) produced a legal brief outlining presidential authority to institute changes in U.S.-Cuba relations. In December 2014, when presidents of the two countries announced a new course in relations, WOLA's recommendations were reflected in President Obama's final executive order.

The Atlantic Advocacy Fund and Atlantic Philanthropies provided grants to a wide range of organizations that have worked on diverse aspects of normalization of US-Cuban relations, among which were the Washington Office on Latin America, the Atlantic Council, the Center for Democracy in the Americas (CDA), Florida International University, the Cuba Study Group, Cuban Americans for Engagement (CAFE), Latin American Working Group (LAWG), the Christopher Reynolds Foundation (CRF) for further small grant making, the Lexington Institute, the Columbia School of Journalism, Brookings Institution, Cuba Now, and the New America Foundation (NAF). These grantees wrote policy briefs and research papers, took Congressional and business delegations on fact-finding trips to Cuba, did opinion polling which provided political cover for normalization of US-Cuban relations, briefed Congressional and administration staff, held background informational conferences for the media on a wide range of US-Cuba policy issues, and conducted direct advocacy campaigns. The Atlantic Advocacy Fund also fostered the Cuba Coalition that coordinated some of these grantees, getting them to share information and work together on unified messaging, and coordinated advocacy.

Over the course of 2015, the U.S. removed Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism; initiated dialogues on human rights, regulatory policy, law enforcement, and legal migration; and reopened its embassy in Havana. In 2016, commercial flights were restored between the two countries and President Obama became the first sitting president to visit Cuba in almost 90 years.
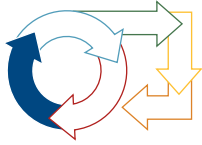
and invest in Detroit.…Philanthropy couldn't substitute for government, but it could hold these systems in place so [when] other sectors resumed their rightful roles there was something to work with."
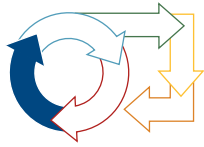
DEVELOPER OF CAPACITY

Philanthropy can make investments that increase capacity for change within sectors, systems, service programs, institutions, and organizations. For Atlantic, this role has included building capacities within local public health systems in rural Viet Nam and district-level and national health systems in South Africa. It also included numerous networks, advocacy organizations, and non-governmental organizations in the countries where Atlantic worked, from the Ageing Well Network in the Republic of Ireland—a group of top executives from 75 government, business, and civil-society organizations that provided leadership to the ageing sector—to providing leadership training, organizational development, and assistance expanding from direct services to policy work for several organizations in Bermuda.

This role reflects a belief that political power is not a fixed commodity to be doled out or used up but something that can be created and, in fact, grown through its use.[E] As Richard Kirsch observes, "Power changes over time, as groups and governments and organizations get more or less powerful. Power is a muscle; if you use it, it gets stronger and you have more of it. So if the goal of philanthropy is to reach a set of policy objectives, you want to build up the power of institutions that can make those changes."

CATALYST, THOUGHT LEADER, CONVENER, CONNECTOR

Through their work in many places and contexts, and indirectly through grantees, philanthropic leaders and staff have access to knowledge and ideas outside the sphere of government. By sharing these resources they can inform, influence, jumpstart, and deepen government responses to social issues. Kavitha Mediratta, Atlantic's chief strategy advisor for equity initiatives and human capital development, observed that Atlantic's work on U.S. school discipline reform often used this approach. For example, after noting that some judges were addressing harsh disciplinary policies when school district leaders were not, Atlantic partnered with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges to develop a program to change practices and brought the project to the attention of the U.S. Department of Justice for additional support.

[E] Kirsch expands on this point in *Fighting for Our Health: The Epic Battle to Make Health Care a Right in the United States.*

Similarly, an evaluation of Atlantic's Children and Youth program in Ireland and Northern Ireland, by Mathematica Policy Research, found that the program was "a catalyst for change in encouraging government investment in evidence-based [programmes], promoting evidence-based practice among service providers, and engaging the academic sector in policy-oriented research" and that these changes likely would not have occurred without philanthropic investment and support.[15] That finding was reinforced by a government official who noted that social change is really about "transformation," which is driven by communities; philanthropy can help connect the big-picture aims of government and the changes desired in communities.

By bringing stakeholders together, philanthropy can bridge gaps between opposing sides, broaden the debate, and create a conduit for the voices of marginalized constituencies to reach government's ear. Philanthropic partners also can connect work being done at different levels of government and in different places. Angela Kelley, senior vice president of the Center for American Progress (an Atlantic grantee for immigration reform), believes that by making sure there was connectivity between what people were doing at the national and local levels, philanthropy "enabled us to grow as a movement."

### INVESTOR IN RESEARCH, EVALUATION, DATA, ANALYSIS, EVIDENCE

Through support for evaluation, research, and demonstration programs, philanthropies provide evidence of efficacy and knowledge about best practices that can inform the efforts of government. As part of the engine for change, this learning infrastructure helps to drive a culture of data and promote greater accountability for outcomes.

In several countries, Atlantic funded baseline studies to illuminate a problem and move the topic up on the government's agenda. In Ireland, one such topic was dementia. "When we asked government what their plans were in relation to dementia, they said, 'In 18 months or so we will have the capacity available to do a study,'" recalls country director Mary Sutton. "We said, 'If we fund the study now and work with you to establish the baseline, would that accelerate policy development?' That grant was not expensive but it was key to moving dementia up the policy agenda." Other examples of philanthropy-funded research that prompted government engagement include:

CONVENING TO LEARN IN BERMUDA

By convening key players and sponsoring communities of practice around social issues, philanthropies can facilitate learning within and across government systems. In Bermuda, Atlantic and the Stewart R. Mott Foundation sponsored a two-day convening of the government's premiere and ministers to discuss public access to information. The topic was "already on the agenda but needed a kick-start, with global examples of why it works, to get buy-in," says Bermuda Country Director Myra Virgil.

The convening led to continued work on the topic. The government approved a Public Access to Information Act in 2010 and, in 2014, established a commissioner to implement the law throughout government.
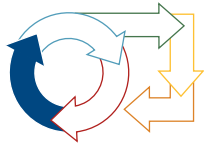
- A longitudinal study of mental health in Viet Nam, which included grants to train Vietnamese workers to conduct the necessary analyses;

- A study of the causes and consequences of school dropout by black males in Bermuda, which catalyzed the development of government interventions in education and employment; and

- A study of school discipline and juvenile justice involvement in Texas, whose dramatic data on racial disparities helped prompt the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice to create a joint initiative on school discipline policy.

Atlantic sometimes built evaluation budgets into its major grants and required grantees to commission the evaluations so they would build their own evaluation knowledge, although this practice varied by country and by the type of investments underway. In some places, such as Ireland (north and south), where Atlantic sought to demonstrate to government that service interventions could work, the philanthropy signed memoranda of understanding with government and/or grantees so that everyone was clear about what outcomes were sought. Detailed logic models formed the framework within which progress was measured. Atlantic also funded expert advisory groups to assist grantees with evaluation.

Atlantic funded three demonstration sites in Ireland for early childhood prevention and intervention programs, paired with a rigorous evaluation to identify which programs should be replicated and which should end. "It became very clear, early on, that there was a very open mind as to whether all these interventions we were planning would work out or not," recalled Elizabeth Canavan, assistant secretary general for the Republic of Ireland's Department of Children and Youth Affairs, at a conference on public-private engagement in 2015. "The quality of evaluation we were getting [previously] wasn't great, [and] that was expertise that Atlantic could bring to us." The positive results of that four-year evaluation helped leverage an €18 million ($24 million) commitment from the government[16]; moreover, the investments in evaluation highlighted for government the importance of using evidence in program design, development, and implementation, according to a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—a development "which may in turn percolate and influence the operating culture of the [Northern Ireland Civil Service] and broader public sector."[17]
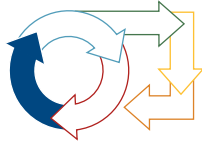
In the United States, on the other hand, Atlantic's funding of evaluation waned after about 2011 because "as we got more deeply into advocacy, it became more challenging to design evaluations that would provide useful information to grantees and to us, given the interlocking nature of grants," Kavitha Mediratta observes. "We shifted to a funding-portfolio approach to evaluation, commissioning studies to understand the extent to which clusters of grants were achieving the desired impact."

Richard Boyle, an evaluator of Atlantic's engagements with government in the Republic of Ireland, and participants in some of these engagements say that the emphasis on rigorous research and program effectiveness increased awareness in government "of the possibility of testing programme expenditure[s], and openness to shifting resources to areas where they may be more productively used."[18] Privately funded research and analysis also can allay some of the fears that prevent government from taking action. In the United States, philanthropic funding for an analysis of the Executive Office's legal ability to stop deportations of undocumented immigrants, conducted by a law firm with "impeccable credentials," helped clarify the strengths and limitations of the President's position to members of government.

SILENT PARTNER

Although many funders like to receive recognition for their contributions, philanthropies can achieve important results by serving as government's silent partner. In fact, Atlantic operated anonymously for its first 15 years. Even after going public, staff continued to downplay their role in public, in keeping with the philanthropy's value of humility. "It's about the work, and the work is carried out by grantees and government partners," explains Country Director Sutton. "We step back; we will appear on public platforms if it's helpful to the work, but we're not seeking recognition. We don't measure our success in column inches or media profile. We're reticent about our inches in the media." Adds Programme Executive Jane Forman: "We want government to take ownership of the work and claim it so they will mainstream and embed it."

Despite these friendly intentions, any philanthropy that seeks to change public policy without calling attention to itself (or revealing its identity) inevitably attracts suspicion. Thus the silent partner role often requires transparency, communication, and honesty during implementation (see p. 44).
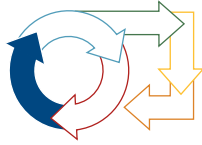
WATCHDOG

Philanthropy can hold government accountable to its commitments. After apartheid ended in South Africa, Atlantic supported activist groups working to make sure the government upheld the democratic rights and protections enshrined in the new Constitution, including the provision of high-quality health care and education. In the Republic of Ireland, grantee organizations that worked on issues involving migrants, asylum seekers, and social integration held government to account on migration issues.
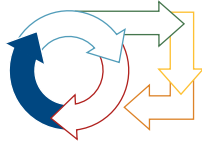
The watchdog role "doesn't necessarily mean antagonism," says Mark Heywood, executive director of Section 27, an advocacy group in South Africa that Atlantic funded. "It can be [about] cooperative accountability, particularly if government accepts that it has these duties and accepts that civil-society organizations can assist them in fulfilling the duties."

CHALLENGER

Philanthropy can support work that publicly opposes government policies, practices, or positions and apply public pressure until changes are made. With funding from philanthropy, for example, South African advocates forced their government to substantially increase public spending on HIV/AIDS and pressured pharmaceutical companies to lower the price of antiretroviral medicine. This role "hasn't just been about putting pressure on government but [pushing] government to put pressure on other parties such as the pharmaceutical companies," Heywood says.

GOVERNMENT ROLES IN ENGAGEMENT

Government also has important roles to play when engaging with philanthropy. As the body that makes laws, regulations, and policies and holds the biggest purse strings, government is an essential driver of change. While philanthropy may have more flexibility to innovate, government holds the key to scaling up effective solutions. In fact, public funding for programs or services often is the goal that motivates philanthropies to engage with government. Moreover, government opposition or inaction can stop change from being implemented. Government can play these roles when engaging with philanthropy:

> "The watchdog role doesn't necessarily mean antagonism. It can be about cooperative accountability, particularly if government accepts that it has these duties and accepts that civil-society organizations can assist them in fulfilling the duties."
>
> Mark Heywood, Executive Director, Section 27, South Africa

GOVERNMENT ROLES

Listener

Thought partner on needs and solutions

Vehicle to scale up solutions

Data provider

LISTENER

If one of philanthropy's roles is to find, test, and prove alternative priorities and responses, then one of government's roles is to absorb the knowledge that philanthropy and its grantees bring and consider how it could improve public policies and practice. This sounds simplistic, but in some geographies it could mean a dramatic shift in how government representatives view themselves and their relationship with philanthropy. In the United States, for example, Atlantic and the Open Society Foundations convened a listening session for leaders and staff from the Departments of Justice and Education "so they could hear directly from stakeholders in the field about school discipline concerns and possible solutions. These activities broadened the conversation and cultivated knowledge and trust among the players within and outside government."[19]

THOUGHT PARTNER ON NEEDS AND SOLUTIONS

Chris Jennings, a health policy expert who held senior White House positions in the Barack Obama and Bill Clinton administrations and was an Atlantic grantee for advocacy on health care reform, notes that government representatives can't directly ask private funders to do things for them, but they can help the private and philanthropic sectors recognize gaps that need to be filled: "[Government] can say what their objective is and where they fell short on it, and foundations can brief government on what they're doing. In those conversations you both find ways to maximize your impact." Jennings adds that such conversations should take place more frequently than they currently do—and the growing number of local, state, and federal government offices of strategic partnerships suggest that perhaps they soon will.[F]

[F] For more on this topic, see: *Philanthropy and Government Working Together: The Role of Offices of Strategic Partnerships in Public Problem Solving.*

VEHICLE TO SCALE UP SOLUTIONS

A guide to philanthropic-government partnerships by The Bridgespan Group notes that state and federal grants and programs play a vital role in expanding implementation of "what works" to reach more people and places.[20] The passage of Viet Nam's helmet law is a good example: Fourteen years earlier, Ho Chi Minh City had mandated helmet use within its borders, but residents complained that there weren't enough helmets available and that the city had exceeded its authority. It wasn't until the national government took up the issue—and philanthropic investment in helmet production made protection readily available—that compliance took root in the city and nationwide.[21]

DATA PROVIDER

Data on individuals and populations are essential to a realistic understanding of the needs they face, the services and interventions that are most effective, and the factors involved in a comprehensive solution. Information gleaned from data is key to improving, implementing, and evaluating programs and policies. As a major data holder, government plays a role in making data available to philanthropic partners and other stakeholders so that collaborators can develop holistic strategies. Across the geographies in which Atlantic worked, state and national governments provided data and/ or support for key analyses by grantees to advance policy goals, including: a large-scale epidemiological study of mental health needs in Viet Nam; an analysis of children's health insurance coverage in the United States; baseline studies of palliative care and dementia in the Republic of Ireland; The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing in Ireland; and an audit of nursing and college infrastructure in South Africa, to name a few.

Philanthropic and government roles often change over time. With more experience and history together, collaborators' roles may become more elaborate. "You accrue good credit, and people owe you more," an interviewee noted. Alternatively, changes in government leadership can cause a collaboration to lose ground and shift roles, especially if the work is closely identified with the person who left. Changes in the philanthropy's image also affect the role that leaders and staff can play; when Atlantic was an anonymous organization, for example, it was easier for Feeney to be personally involved in Northern Ireland negotiations than it was after anonymity ended.

As the next chapter illustrates, the roles played by philanthropy and government vary according to context. If government leaders have already decided to move in a particular direction, for instance, philanthropy's role is not to initiate change but perhaps to support it through investments in learning and by building proof points. At other times, philanthropy's role may be to challenge the status quo, lift up options, and open new doors.

Engagement in Action

Strategies for engagement, and tactics for implementing them, are not static choices. They arise and evolve depending on many factors, including:

- The problem requiring solutions;

- The governance structure and theory (e.g., one-party vs. multi-party system; democratic, socialist, communist, or totalitarian leadership; strong vs. weak executive powers);

- The type of philanthropy involved [e.g., large vs. small; 501(c)(3) vs. 501(c)(4) structure; donor involvement vs. no involvement; multi-national, national, regional, or community focus; limited-life vs. perpetual grant making];

- The mission, goals, values, principles, and culture of the philanthropy, the government, and other entities involved;

- The social/economic/cultural/political environment (e.g., unified or deeply divided constituencies; economic crisis vs. stable economy; etc.); and

- The specific needs of individuals, populations, and organizations who may be affected by the engagement or impacted by its results.

The table on p. 24–25 summarizes some of the ways that governmental and philanthropic contexts affect engagement strategies, distilled from the geographies included in this study. It is a representative list, not a comprehensive one, given that an entire case study could be written just on the role of context. (For instance, a 2016 analysis of just one engagement in one geography—Atlantic's effort to change U.S. immigration policy—found

Sample of Contextual Factors and their Effect on Engagement Strategies

GOVERNMENT OR PHILANTHROPIC CONTEXT	GEOGRAPHIC EXAMPLE	SOCIAL/ECONOMIC/ POLITICAL CONTEXT	POTENTIAL EFFECT ON ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES
Majority rule	United States Bermuda	Issues are driven by the election cycle; government leaders tend to focus on short-term solutions and avoid risk[23] Public bureaucracy may lack incentive for results-oriented performance[24]	Long-term relationships are needed to counteract short-term thinking Philanthropy and its grantees and partners play an important role in holding government accountable for follow-through and results
Strong multi-party governance	Republic of Ireland United States	Criticism of public policy is common	The inside/outside strategy may work better than in places with tightly controlled one-party governance
Young democracy	South Africa Northern Ireland (in terms of full functioning)	Vibrant, open political environment; people raise their voices and object to policies they do not like Government may seek international exposure and relationships to further embed and institutionalize democracy	Engagement operates on dual tracks: achieving the policy goal for the issue at hand, and promoting the stability, capacity, and accountability of the government itself.
Post-conflict government	Northern Ireland	Physical conflict has ended, but society remains deeply divided; new institutions may be undermined by some participants' unchanged and opposing views Public services are administered unequally across populations Political parties are suspicious of each other and protective of their own interests	Engagement has to span all political groups. Philanthropic partners try to ensure that representatives of all major parties are in the room when talking about the issue. Philanthropic partners avoid letting an issue get too closely identified with one political party, allowing divisions to become deeper, and allowing one side to gain political capital from their investments. Engagement may focus particularly on addressing the root causes of enduring inequalities.

Sample of Contextual Factors and
their Effect on Engagement Strategies (continued)

GOVERNMENT OR PHILANTHROPIC CONTEXT	GEOGRAPHIC EXAMPLE	SOCIAL/ECONOMIC/ POLITICAL CONTEXT	POTENTIAL EFFECT ON ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES
Socialist-communist government	Viet Nam	One-party state with strong central control Factions within government that seek stronger connections either to their own government or to international powers may try to manipulate engagement	Philanthropic partners cannot oppose or antagonize government directly; they must work quietly within the system and behind the scenes Engagement requires a sophisticated understanding of the system, its underlying factions, and its leaders' personalities Engagement requires careful diplomacy and communications Solutions must be locally owned and championed The narrative for change is solutions-based, not deficit-oriented (e.g., seek to "address gaps" rather than "reform policy")
Multi-party system with strong partisanship	United States	Hyper-partisan social and political environment Politics and business interests intersect Social issues are viewed along racial lines and political affiliations	On issues that at a given time are attracting partisan support or opposition, messaging becomes especially important Philanthropic partners do best by pursuing multiple paths and an array of decision makers rather than focusing on one party Engagement requires an understanding of and connection to people in positions of influence, careful diplomacy, good social-issue information, and deep public consultation Engagement should focus on "winning the issue" (the policy) rather than securing a particular champion or party's support (the politics)
Sparse philanthropic landscape	Republic of Ireland	With little private funding available, engagement with government may be the only way to achieve a major social goal	Pressure increases to embed reforms into mainstream public policies so they have the greatest chance of being sustained
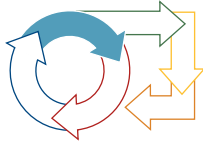
that the prospects for reform were "seriously impacted" by *all* of these contextual factors: "9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Great Recession, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Ebola, the Migration Crisis stemming from the Syrian Civil War…[and] the arrival or approach of majority-minority status, fueling debate about American identity, the role of immigrants, and, at times, xenophobia."[22])

With the importance of context in mind, the discussion of strategies, tactics, challenges, and solutions offered here provides background for understanding the lessons that follow.
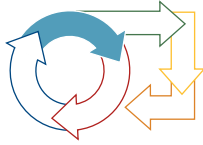
STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING

Philanthropies and governments choose engagement strategies to match the desired outcome. "If you're trying to impact early childhood education, and your objective is to raise outcomes for all children, there's little point in setting up your own island of excellence that serves a small population of children," observes Ireland's Mary Sutton. Zola Madikizela, country director for South Africa, expands on that point:

> [Philanthropy and government] may have different views on strategy, though both of you may desire the same outcome. For example, government may have an interest in ensuring that a particular medicine reaches people who require them, such as antiretroviral treatment, but you may differ on how many people should be treated, what the treatment period is, how you ensure equitable access, whether people should have the drugs for free, or the system that should be in place to ensure that such drugs are available all the time.

> You may decide that maybe cost should guide decisions, which leads to one set of actions. At other times, you may interact to persuade [government officials to take a different position]. Your [philanthropy's] strategy is, to a large extent, determined by the importance of the issue to [government] and the extent to which influence will give you the outcome you desire, or whether you require a consortium to come together and put pressure on government.
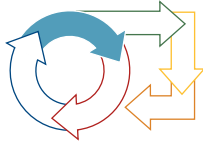
In most places where Atlantic worked, engagement with government included some combination of the following strategies.

DUAL TRACKS OF INFLUENCE, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT

The "inside/outside game" involves simultaneously working with public officials and building pressure on them from outside government. "You're sitting down with a [government leader] and using inside relationships to create a bully pulpit and frame a set of issues. Then you work with advocacy to put pressure on the officials," explains Atlantic's former U.S. Country Director, Steve McConnell. Although this strategy is not necessary for all engagements with government, advocacy organizations funded by Atlantic used it extensively in the United States for work on health care, school discipline, immigration policy, and school-based health. To build support for the Elev8 program, for example, Atlantic's advocacy grantees hired lobbyists; trained parents to advocate for their children; and arranged trips to meet with Congressional delegates, state legislators, and governors. Locally, grantees like LISC-Chicago deployed its deep relationships with civic and neighborhood organizations when policy makers were making decisions that didn't align with Elev8's goals. Nationally, grantees like the School-Based Health Alliance and Coalition for Community Schools helped to secure several hundred million dollars to expand school-based health programs in general through federal funding streams.

An evaluation of Atlantic's Human Rights Programme in the Republic of Ireland describes a form of inside/outside strategy in which some grantee organizations sought a presence on policymaking bodies, such as governmental commissions, steering committees, and advisory panels on human rights, and on nongovernmental forums that contribute to departmental policy, while other grantees declined such positions in order to take a more oppositional stance. These efforts, along with an ability to identify and act on windows of opportunity to influence policy, earned major wins on penal reform, human rights infrastructure, and other reforms in Ireland.[25]

Because the "outside" part of this strategy involves criticism of public policy, this strategy may be more viable in countries with strong multi-party governance and cultural norms of dissent and civic protest, such as the United States or Ireland, than in places with tightly controlled one-party governance, such as Viet Nam. The inside/outside strategy also may be most common when philanthropy is seeking to change legislation. In the United States, examples include Atlantic's work on health care, school discipline, immigration reform, and community schools with health services; Atlantic used this strategy in Northern Ireland to promote restorative justice and in the Republic of Ireland to advance LGBT and other human rights.

The inside/outside strategy may involve philanthropy in supporting legal action against government—often with the implicit consent of people within that same administration:

- Philanthropy staff involved in immigration reform in the United States report that President Barack Obama, who supported their efforts, once told the head of an Atlantic grantee organization that "he needed advocates to keep pressure on him so he could take action."

- In Ireland, Atlantic funded The Free Legal Advice Centres to successfully challenge the government's refusal to grant Dr. Lydia Foy, a transgender woman, a birth certificate to reflect her gender change to female. The court battle not only won Foy the right to a new certificate[26] but forced the government to develop legislation recognizing transgender persons—albeit seven years after the Irish High Court judge who heard Foy's case called for such legislation.

- Kimberley Chin, who headed Atlantic's U.S. efforts to expand children's access to health insurance coverage through Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Affordable Care Act, recalls an incident that occurred when she was an advocate, before entering philanthropy. She was working with Medicaid leaders in a state where benefits did not reach communities as quickly as legally required. One day, a policy director for state services mentioned that colleagues in another state division were "getting a lot of attention" because of a lawsuit filed against their department. In a separate meeting with Legal Aid, a nonprofit organization that provides free legal services to low-income people, someone else said, 'It's time for a lawsuit [against the Medicaid unit].'" The government representative and the advocate were just stating facts, Chin says, but the implication was clear: Philanthropy could help by supporting a lawsuit to force government to improve its practices.

An outside strategy may be adversarial but doesn't have to be. In the United States, for instance, Atlantic's primary advocacy grantee in health care reform, Health Care for America Now, took a strong and controversial stance in favor of the public option for health insurance. Ultimately, that stance helped to unify and retain a diverse set of advocates, some of whom might otherwise have gravitated toward other options, a participant
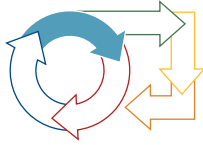
observes. In school discipline reform, however, advocacy grantees who began with an adversarial stance softened their approach as the effort began to make progress. "You always have to calibrate pressure tactics to what you need strategically to win," advises Kavitha Mediratta.

Moreover, the degree to which a strategy is adversarial may have as much to do with the place where it is implemented as the strategy itself. In the United States, for example, advocacy efforts on school discipline reform involved emotionally charged protests and marches in Washington, DC, garnering national media coverage. In Baltimore, however, strong local support for reform made those tactics unnecessary, while in Denver and other cities, tactics shifted away from protests once the issue became a priority for government leaders.

Finally, in the case of philanthropies that work beyond the borders of their home country or across major jurisdictional boundaries, such as states or provinces, "outside" takes on an extra level of meaning and challenge: being from outside the place in which they seek to change policy. Philanthropic leaders and staff experienced this keenly in 2015, as the work on marriage equality in Ireland culminated in a crucial vote by referendum. Although Chuck Feeney is regarded as a "hero" for his philanthropy in Ireland, he and Atlantic were vilified as a foreign influence as tensions mounted before the vote. The same situation may exist when philanthropies work outside their home town or state, even within the same nation. It shouldn't deter an inside/outside strategy, but it is something to anticipate.

STRENGTHENING OR BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

Investments in physical and institutional infrastructure for health and education in every geography where The Atlantic Philanthropies operated illustrate this strategy in action—from building (or building up) hospitals, hospices, and health clinics to establishing centers of higher education and cultural institutions. Across five continents, Atlantic invested more than $2.5 billion in physical infrastructure,[27] and by August 2014 capital projects accounted for almost a third of the philanthropy's total grantmaking.[28]

In *Laying Foundations for Change: Capital Investments of The Atlantic Philanthropies*, an Atlantic-funded book, essayist Matthew Bishop observes that many of these infrastructure improvements—notably university facilities—are "an inherently leveraged gift, because they help unleash the
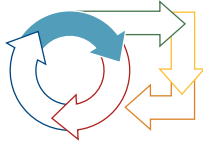
human capital of the researchers and students who work in them."[29] In that sense, agrees fellow essayist Tony Proscio, "If done properly, philanthropic support for a building is not the purchase of a product. It's an investment in enterprise, a long-term underwriting of whatever goes on inside."[30]

Infrastructure investments are important to philanthropic-government engagement because they often involve co-investment. In fact, Atlantic's capital investments almost always required matching contributions from government and/or other private funders, in an attempt to ensure the projects' sustainability, and they typically generated at least three times the value of Atlantic's investment.[31] For example, the Atlantic-government partnership in the Republic of Ireland known as the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions created 1.1 million square feet of new research facilities, 46 research institutes or programs, 1,000 research positions and 1,600 new postgraduate positions—and Atlantic's $262 million investment leveraged more than $1.3 billion from the government.[32] The key for philanthropic partners, Bishop writes, is to know "when a physical infrastructure can help lift an impactful institution or organization to a higher level of impact and how to use it to recruit other funders and even drive systemic change."[33]

In *Laying Foundations for Change*, Tony Proscio makes these additional observations about physical infrastructure that are relevant to philanthropy-government engagement:[34]

- Capital grants are one critical point in a philanthropic process but not the whole story. Support for a new building or complex is usually a kind of midpoint between smart planning and smart management—all of which are part of a longer-running project.

- Grants to improve physical capital are also investments in human capital. Feeney's largest and longest infrastructure investments were inspired first by leaders in whom he wanted to invest because of their intellectual dynamism, entrepreneurial zest, and leadership. Moreover, the creation of a high-quality new building often helps to elevate the ambitions of people who live and work there, especially in places and sectors that are undercapitalized.

- Capital projects are interventions in systems that extend well beyond the perimeter of the project. New facilities for research, education, medical care, human services, and the like inevitably alter the broader
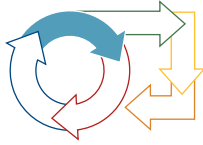
field of activity in which the building and its occupants operate. In fact, evaluations of Atlantic's investments in health infrastructure found that the benefits of the improved system more than compensated for the cost of facility upgrades.

- An important, well-chosen building can establish alliances and credibility that make other achievements possible. Capital projects produce tangible, three-dimensional products that government and other sectors may value. They also make it possible for other public and private funders to envision improvements they might not have thought possible before.

Proscio cautions that capital funding is "a specialized skill," requiring philanthropic leaders and staff to understand both the current complexities of creating infrastructure and the long-term ramifications. Ultimately, he writes, "The best capital philanthropy is a complex calculation about both masonry and movements—about locations and structures and the wherewithal to maintain them, but also about the business to be done inside, including its soundness and management and the influence it will exert outside the newly constructed walls."[35]

ADVOCACY

Funding advocacy is important for philanthropies that seek not only to solve an immediate problem but to change circumstances on a broader scale. "It's that issue of feeding a person versus teaching them to fish—and to ask questions about why things are like this in the first place," an interviewee explained. Advocacy also can help when government leaders are not inclined to take up an issue that philanthropy deems important. The government in Northern Ireland, for instance, was not eager to address restorative justice. "It was just sheer pushing on our part and by [advocacy] organizations that made it happen. They would never have supported it otherwise," Country Director Padraic Quirk says.

Examples of Atlantic's support for advocacy are almost too numerous to mention.[G] Advocacy activities can include support for:

- Research and dissemination that increases understanding of an issue and produces credible evidence about a solution's effectiveness. "We wouldn't be where we are if we hadn't had the bank of evidence, and the advocates calling for change," observes Northern Ireland

> "The best capital philanthropy is a complex calculation about both masonry and movements— about locations and structures and the wherewithal to maintain them, but also about the business to be done inside, including its soundness and management and the influence it will exert outside the newly constructed walls."
>
> Tony Proscio, *Laying Foundations for Change*

[G] For an overall analysis, see Investing in Change: Why Supporting Advocacy Makes Sense for Foundations. For specific examples, see: Guns and Roses: Advocacy in an Emerging Democracy, which contains a crosswalk of key steps in crafting an advocacy framework distilled from three initiatives; and Tilling the Field: Lessons About Philanthropy's Role in School Discipline Reform.
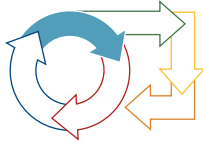
"What we have learned in our work around the globe is that there is no sustainable social progress without social movements—without ordinary citizens, those who need the change the most, taking the lead on their own behalf."

Gara LaMarche, Former President, Atlantic

ᴴ See "Advocacy, Politics, and Philanthropy: A Reflection on a Decade of Immigration Reform Advocacy, 2004-2014."

Country Director Quirk. "That first step of building models pays benefits in the long run, as opposed to just knocking on [government's] door and saying what you think."

- Efforts to raise awareness and shape the public narrative on an issue. As Christopher Oechsli says, this work is "about affecting perceptions, cultures, and narratives." It can include media placement, advertising, speeches to influential audiences, legislative testimony, and participation on regulatory boards and commissions.[36] Often, this strategy uses a campaign structure. In the Republic of Ireland, for example, Atlantic engaged the Forum on Migration and Communications to lead a three-year media campaign to build public awareness of migration and social integration issues. Philanthropy staff in the United States conducted similar efforts on health care, immigration, and school discipline. "It's a more indirect way of influencing government—creating a narrative that leads to a more favorable environment for administrative or legislative change," an interviewee said.

  The campaign strategy requires careful management, however, to keep members working well together. Johanna Morariu, a director at Innovation Network who evaluated Atlantic's work on immigration policy reform,ᴴ observes that "the campaign was [criticized] at times for excluding some groups that wanted to be part of it. [Having a] set of organizations that shared many important characteristics in the campaign, all focused on the same set of key decision makers, made it easy for them to work together but didn't necessarily harness the fullest set of actors."

- Community organizing. The people and communities most affected by an issue often have the greatest stake in a policy outcome but the slimmest chance of being heard by decision makers. Philanthropy plays a crucial role in helping these constituencies organize on their own behalf to make their wishes known. Working through grantee organizations, Atlantic funded this type of advocacy frequently—in South Africa to fight for HIV treatment and the rights of people living with AIDS, and in the United States to engage day laborers in advocating for immigration policy reform and students and families in pressing for school reforms, for example.
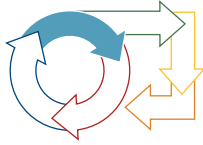
As Chris Brown, former director of education and engagement for LISC-Chicago, explains:

> You have to support local people to make decisions about their communities and lead the development efforts in their own communities. Atlantic invested in a program that built youth leadership so they could speak for themselves about programs [involving school-based health], and we did community organizer trainings to build the capacity of parents at schools to advocate on their own behalf. We did trips to [the state capitol] every year so students and parents could interact directly with state legislators, and we took groups of parents to DC to visit Congress members on the Hill.

- Grassroots mobilization to demonstrate broad-based public support for policy change. This can include mobilizing membership organizations and coalitions to visit elected officials or supporting media campaigns to build public will, shape perceptions, and mobilize action. In Bermuda, two Atlantic grantees—including a grassroots organization—organized an advocacy campaign to include sexual orientation in legislation banning discrimination. The advocates approached every government minister and church leader to discuss the topic, and they mobilized large portions of the LGBT population to testify about the realities of living with discrimination in that country.

- Human and organizational capacity building, by supporting staff, infrastructure, and membership development of advocacy organizations.[37] Atlantic leaders are fond of recounting a story told by former Board Chairman Frank Rhodes about a French general who ordered a sergeant to plant a tree. When the sergeant protested it would take 100 years for the tree to mature, the general replied, "Then plant it before lunch—there isn't a moment to lose."[38] Atlantic Philanthropies President Christopher Oechsli uses this story to make the point that "our issues are not solved with a single program or initiative but with people and organizations that will be effective long-term. We're not always looking for short-term results. So a lot of what we care about extends beyond the life of the foundation to things like physical and human capital. It's the best final and lasting investment we can make."
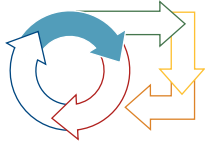
Atlantic targeted capacity building not only to expert organizations but also to grassroots, community-based organizations and the individuals most affected by a proposed policy change. This strategy often involved peer learning opportunities and training, coaching, or other technical assistance.
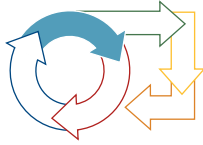
- Policy development. By helping to develop policy options, grantee organizations can give legislators solutions to social problems. Philanthropic support for this type of advocacy helped to change laws in the Republic of Ireland and South Africa so that LGBT people can enjoy the same human rights as other citizens; create a ministry for health and seniors and a national policy on aging in Bermuda; and win passage of a parcel tax earmarked for high school reform that produced sustainable funding for community schools like Elev8 in the United States, among other examples.

  The decision whether to use this strategy, like so many others, depends on values and context. As Shari Silberstein, executive director of Equal Justice USA (a nonprofit advocacy group that works to abolish the death penalty), points out, "When voices across the spectrum are speaking out—because of litigation, public awareness, mobilization, etc.—it can lead to the need to actually change the law. That sets us on the path to engage with policymakers in one way or another."

- Lobbying for the support of proposed legislation and ballot initiatives at the local, state or federal level to achieve desired changes. Countries regulate lobbying by philanthropy in different ways; in the United States, the amount of lobbying a philanthropy can do depends on whether it is classified as a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization. Under IRS tax rules, 501(c)(3) nonprofits exist for charitable or educational purposes and can only conduct a limited amount of lobbying, advocacy, or political activity or risk losing their tax-exempt status. They cannot participate in political campaigns at all, but they can support non-partisan activities that educate voters and encourage people to participate in the electoral process. 501(c)(4) nonprofits, which operate "primarily to further the common good and general welfare of the people of the community," can engage in unlimited lobbying and can support some electoral candidates when

"To have the resources so you could not only crawl up to that lobbying line but also step over it is very empowering."

Rebecca Rittgers, Fund Director, Themis Fund,
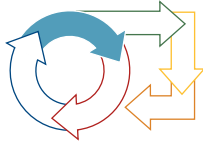Former Atlantic Programme Executive

relevant to their social welfare purposes. (For tools and guidance on these distinctions, see the Alliance for Justice's initiative, http://bolderadvocacy.org/.)

The Atlantic Philanthropies is in a unique position on lobbying because most of its various entities were chartered in Bermuda rather than the United States. Its funds didn't "become" 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) until received by a grantee, and then the designation hinged on the grantee's own tax status. Of course, a number of philanthropies based in the United States have been deliberately created as 501(c)(4) social welfare organizations. In fact, for a time The Atlantic Philanthropies had a separate Atlantic Advocacy Fund, which was entirely a U.S. 501(c)(4) organization and thus could conduct a significant amount of lobbying as well as support ballot initiatives. Interviewees describe this lobbying capacity as "crucial" for achieving the desired results, especially in work on death penalty and health care reforms in the United States.

Even for 501(c)(3) philanthropies, however, lobbying need not be a scary enterprise, interviewees say—and it certainly shouldn't keep them from trying to affect policy outcomes. "You have to look at the whole menu" of allowable activities under the IRS tax code, says Annmarie Benedict. Recalling a campaign in Nebraska, she notes that 501(c)(3) grantees couldn't support a ballot initiative to abolish the death penalty but they could conduct activities to help educate legislators and voters about facts related to the death penalty. "Just saying that we have 11 people on death row but no drugs to kill them [makes a point], without asking anybody to vote," Benedict notes. "Savvy groups understand where that line is." And for those who are hesitant, philanthropy can help access legal guidance on what they can and cannot do.

- Litigation. Advocacy organizations funded by philanthropy often take legal action to overturn the policies and practices they oppose—a strategy used in South Africa to achieve same-sex marriage rights, secure HIV treatment for 2 million people, and help hundreds of welfare applicants gain their benefits, and in the United States to end the juvenile death penalty and the New York City police department's stop-and-frisk tactics, to name just a few examples. Typically,
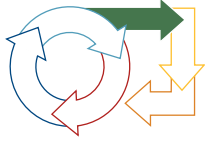
philanthropy only supports litigation when all other means of influence and negotiation have failed; as a representative of the South African nonprofit that pursued litigation in the welfare benefits case told an interviewer in 2010, this approach "should not be used as a whip to get government to respond to issues. The purpose of litigation should be to achieve policy change to ensure effective administration."[40]

Successful litigation can have stunning results. Nonprofit advocacy leader Mark Heywood has "no doubt there is a direct link" between Atlantic-funded litigation to secure antiretroviral treatment in South Africa and "the fact that 3 million people were prevented from dying because of rollout of the treatment." However, Martin O'Brien, Atlantic's Senior Vice President for Programmes, observes that "litigation is not always a quick fix," and even after a legal win there remains the task of implementing the new law. O'Brien further notes that "litigation, on its own, will often fail to deliver the desired change"—unless it also is accompanied by greater public awareness of people's rights, assistance in claiming those rights, and broader social mobilization around the issue.[41]

Philanthropies often use more than one strategy for engagement, creating what Bill Eggers calls "a buckshot, not a silver bullet, approach" to social change. For example:

- In The Republic of Ireland, Atlantic's strategies to address human rights included partnering with government to address disability issues, supporting policy advocacy on migration and LGBT issues, and strengthening the capacities of organizations such as the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and the country's free legal advice centers.

- In South Africa, Atlantic worked not only to create public health programs but to improve capacity to implement them at the leadership, management, and front-line practitioner levels, to improve public awareness and information about people's rights, and to mobilize around those rights. Grantee organizations conducted research, media outreach, and grassroots education and mobilization while also working through the courts.

TACTICS FOR IMPLEMENTING ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Addressing root causes

Working from the ground up and the top down

Creating networks of organizations

Promoting nonpartisanship

Focusing on mid-level government engagement

Leading with ideas and results, not money

- In Bermuda, Atlantic worked to build nonprofit organizations' capacities to develop policies and use referendums or other legislative actions to achieve goals, and to create templates for making information publicly available. Policy topics included the disproportionate impact of stop-and-search practices on black residents, public access to information, and adaptive transportation for residents with mobility impairments.

- In the United States, Atlantic staff "opened the window" for school discipline reform in the education and justice systems "through investments and partnerships that: (a) created a national movement of grassroots and legal advocates, educators, and justice leaders that would simultaneously build pressure and offer support for change; (b) cultivated awareness and knowledge of the harms of zero tolerance and of alternative policies and practices that keep children in school; and (c) reframed the practice of zero-tolerance school suspension as a dysfunctional and racially discriminatory practice that threatens educational attainment."[42]

TACTICS FOR IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES

How a philanthropy implements its strategies for engaging with government can be as important as the strategies themselves. Driven in part by its values, Atlantic's tactics for engagement laid the groundwork for successes as well as shortcomings—and for many of the lessons we explore in the next chapter. Key tactics included:

ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES

Focusing on the underlying causes of social ills rather than on treating symptoms is a basic tenet of strategic philanthropy. In Atlantic's case, this usually meant identifying and remediating the causes of inequity. In Northern Ireland, for example, Catholic and Protestant children typically do not interact until adulthood, because they traditionally attend schools where all students, teachers, and staff belong to one religion or the other. Realizing that such segregation "perpetuates suspicion and mistrust of the 'other,' fuels prejudice, and hinders communities working together to build a better future," Atlantic staff concluded that peace in Northern Ireland "would not be fully realized if children and schools remained divided and
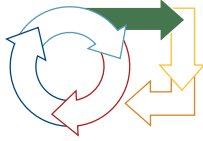
unconnected."[43] This led to engagement with government through policy advocacy, partnership, and co-funded projects to promote integrated and shared education.

### WORKING FROM THE GROUND UP AND THE TOP DOWN

Just as the inside/outside strategy employs the dual tactics of pressure and support, the top-down/bottom-up approach maximizes opportunities to build support among decision makers while also creating a groundswell of demand, a critical mass of proof points, and a solid base of decentralized leadership and capacity to implement the policy change. For Viet Nam Country Director Le Nhan Phuong, nothing illustrates this approach better than Atlantic's work to get the helmet law passed. "Viet Nam has a central government, but no matter how strong it is, to run well the system has to rely on leadership on the ground," Dr. Phuong explains. "So a lot of the work we do involves local leadership at the provincial and district levels. When the results are desirable, they themselves are the ones to take it up to the next level and become the champions. Demand percolates up from the bottom, and not top down."

Instead of promoting a helmet law explicitly, Atlantic committed to addressing Viet Nam's high number of traffic-related injuries. Atlantic supported research on the topic, contributed to the design and production of a helmet that was affordable and attractive, and helped non-governmental organizations connect with government representatives. "One day, the law came into being! We didn't even have direct connection to the law-making body," Phuong says. "But the work we did led up to that point."

CREATING NETWORKS OF ORGANIZATIONS

Networks "build constituencies supportive of policy change among stakeholders who bring different resources and interest to the table; identify individuals and units within organizations that will carry forward specific plans and collaborations; and ensure there is the necessary operational capacity for those charged with delivery on the ground [to successfully execute] the policy intention," according to Ulster University's Colin Knox.[44]

In the United States, for example, state organizations that participated in the Health Care for America Now (HCAN) Campaign reported that the campaign's network "raised their profiles, strengthened relationships with partner organizations and members of Congress, and in many instances
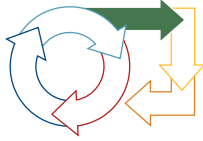
helped forge new relationships."[45] Another sort of network formed through philanthropic partnerships to reform school discipline policies: Atlantic co-created the Discipline Disparities Research-to-Practice Collaborative, which networked nationally known researchers, advocates, educators, and policy analysts and provided small grants to produce new studies of disciplinary disparities. With additional funding from Atlantic and The California Endowment, the researchers presented their findings at a national symposium convened by another Atlantic grantee, Education Week, and Gallup, Inc., which ensured broad media coverage.[46]
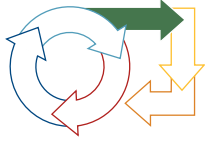
PROMOTING NONPARTISANSHIP

Acting on pressing social issues in deeply divided, highly partisan political environments requires developing relationships with both sides of the aisle in ways that encourage dialogue and joint problem solving. This was the case for the reconciliation and peace-building work that Atlantic funded in Northern Ireland and its U.S. investments in health care, school discipline, death penalty, and immigration policy reforms. In these places a non-partisan approach by key grantees helped to navigate the political waters. In advocating for repeal of capital punishment laws, for example, Equal Justice USA (an Atlantic grantee) helped a state-based group of conservative advocates called Concerned About the Death Penalty work at a national scale, because their views on the death penalty aligned. "Equal Justice USA is about bridge building between left and right, between crime survivors and people accused of crime, between law enforcement and defense. There is nobody we can't work with," says Executive Director Shari Silberstein.

Similarly, the U.S. grantee organizations that negotiated on immigration policy with state and federal legislators across party lines generated traction at a time when other strategies seemed less successful, according to evaluator Johanna Morariu. She notes that when a grantee made progress with one political party, leaders on the other side "felt more pressure to work with [the organization] too, because they didn't want to be the ones who failed to solve the problem." At the same time, however, the reform effort overall became increasingly aligned with the Democratic Party and its candidates, because advocates deemed them most likely to achieve the reforms. At times, that perceived partisanship may have undermined the campaign's overall success.

"We didn't lead with the money; we led with the issue and with trying to develop a shared view of what we wanted to achieve. The money only followed if they were prepared to put money on the table, too."

Mary Sutton, Country Director, Republic of Ireland

In Northern Ireland, nonpartisanship has additional motivations. "We operate in a zero-sum political environment where if you seem to be cozying up to one political party you're seen as against the other. So we had to avoid letting an issue get too close to one party," an Atlantic grantee explains. Thus, for example, Atlantic's Northern Ireland staff always ensure that representatives of both major political parties are in the room when issues are being discussed.

FOCUSING ON MID-LEVEL GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

Somewhere between the bottom-up and top-down approaches lies the all-important middle layer of government, populated by the officials and civil servants who have responsibility for developing new practices, new ways of doing business, and new target outcomes. Because these people can make or break the implementation of a policy change, "We spend most of our time on things that need active pushing with mid-level civil servants," acknowledges former Atlantic Programme Executive Peter Boyd, who works in Northern Ireland.

LEADING WITH IDEAS AND RESULTS, NOT MONEY

As Christopher Oechsli has said, "Big bets require some thoughtful listening, learning, and reflection. Just dumping a big chunk of money is not the answer." With that philosophy in mind, Atlantic staff sometimes tried to approach government engagement as an opportunity to "think first and fund second." Says Ireland's Mary Sutton, "We didn't lead with the money; we led with the issue and with trying to develop a shared view of what we wanted to achieve. The money only followed if they were prepared to put money on the table, too."

EVOLVING ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Engagement strategies and approaches tend to change over time as relationships among philanthropy staff, government representatives, and grantees grow and as needs and opportunities evolve. After a philanthropy-funded demonstration program proves its worth, for instance, government and philanthropy may enter into a different sort of partnership to mainstream the practices. If lobbying by traditional advocacy groups fails to produce results, philanthropy might invest more advocacy dollars in community organizing and grassroots mobilization. A change in government leadership or an economic crisis can necessitate a change in tactics. And after new policies become law, people in government who previously resisted change may become more receptive, opening the door to new types of engagement.

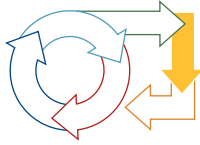**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ABOUT TACTICS**

What is the underlying cause of the problem we're trying to address?

Are we engaging at the grassroots (locally/regionally and among people at the front lines and mid levels of government) as well as the grasstops (nationally and among top leaders)?

How can we link organizations and constituencies to improve knowledge and support for the changes we seek?

What are the stress points between partisan groups, and how can we avoid aggravating them?

Is the problem a lack of knowledge/understanding or of money? How can we fill these gaps?

CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS

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[1] See, for example: Public-Philanthropic Partnerships: Trends, Innovations, and Challenges; and Public-Philanthropic Partnerships in the U.S.: A Literature Review of Recent Experiences.

Many of the challenges, tensions, and potential pitfalls of philanthropic-government engagement are well known.[1] They can include:

THE SLOW PACE OF ACTION WITHIN GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR'S AVERSION TO RISK

For example, Atlantic made a grant to develop the Center for Successful Ageing in Ireland in 2006; 10 years later, the center finally was scheduled to open. (Bureaucratic delays were exacerbated by Ireland's economic collapse in 2008–11.) Given this reality, philanthropic staff find it useful to focus on the long-term view, which often means framing solutions in terms of core values and beliefs. Notes American strategist Richard Kirsch, "If you align solutions with long-term values, it is much easier to win solutions because you're changing the ocean that all the policies swim in. It becomes a friendlier ocean."

MUTUAL SUSPICION

People outside the public sector "don't generally expect to trust government. They aren't used to being invited in," says Suzanne Immerman, former director of strategic partnerships for the U.S. Department of Education. Some people in the public sector, meanwhile, fear that philanthropy may try to impose its own agenda—or, worse, cannot be held accountable for its actions. In Viet Nam, the value Atlantic placed on humility initially raised suspicion among government officials, who wondered what Atlantic was trying to hide. After officials grew to understand the philanthropy's approach they embraced it, however. Ultimately, the value placed on "doing philanthropy without asking a whole lot in return for ourselves or for the organization, other than achieving common objectives, facilitated [engagement]," the county director says.

The level of suspicion that government representatives feel toward philanthropy may be related to how well philanthropic partners understand the local political, social, and cultural context, suggests South Africa Country Director Madikizela. "If you don't understand the local context, government will see any solution as a 'Washington solution'" and become resistant, he says.
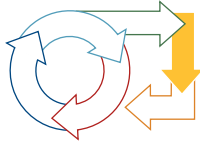
LACK OF LONG-TERM (PUBLIC) OPERATING SUPPORT TO FOLLOW (PHILANTHROPIC) SEED FUNDING

Atlantic encountered this problem most frequently, though not exclusively, in Bermuda. With support from philanthropy, advocates there won the government's commitment to support construction and operations for a new public sports facility, available to families of average income. The center opened in 2011, but after a change of government in 2013 operating funds were discontinued. Simultaneously, the economic recession caused memberships to plummet, and without the promised support from government "we were left with the challenge of finding sufficient money for operations," says the project's former managing director, Melvin Bassett. By 2014, the center was forced to close.

Similarly, staff in the Bermuda government assisted advocates in developing a plan to provide transportation services for senior citizens and mobility-impaired residents. The plan, which used demographic data to propose bus routes around the destinations most often visited by the target populations, also identified places where elderly or immobile citizens could not easily board buses. With funding from Atlantic, the planners studied funding models and proposed three options. Government leaders chose not to fund any option, however, and without money for implementation the carefully developed plan died on the vine. When situations like this occur, says Country Director Myra Virgil, "Not only does the community not benefit from the resource, we take steps back in getting engagement from funders for other community-driven projects."

Lack of public funding not only limits government's capacity to implement and monitor policy changes, it also increases the temptation to use philanthropic dollars as a gap-filler, supporting the needs that government cannot meet rather than the uses for which it was intended. That pressure produces a continuing need for collaborators to monitor and track their agreements. Even with careful monitoring, it can be hard to maintain commitments when staff or leaders change and priorities shift.

POWER DYNAMICS

The balance of power is inherently skewed between a foundation or wealthy donor and its/his/her grantees; and between a government that controls vast resources and authority, and a single private funder. The donor/grantee challenge emerged for Atlantic in Viet Nam, where Chuck
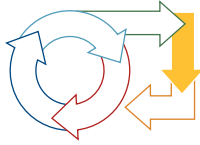
Feeney's enthusiasm about strengthening institutions of higher education and his connections to leaders in other countries led Atlantic to propose an ambitious peer advising relationship between university administrators and high-ranking government officials from Australia, Ireland, the United States, and Viet Nam. Vietnamese officials initially were "very excited and happy," Country Director Le Nhan Phuong recalls, "but because this was a relationship that we recommended and they felt compelled to accept, when we put them together the dynamics were not optimal. It was like an arranged marriage. The trust level wasn't there. Questions of conflict of interest and motivation eventually surfaced. A number of our grants and initiatives didn't work out as well because the partners couldn't work well together."
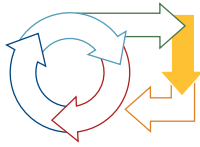
The second type of power dynamic plays out in two ways: private philanthropy often is criticized for having too much influence over public policy when its leaders, staff, and grantees try to advance a particular perspective; and, conversely, government has power over philanthropy because it holds authority for making and enforcing the policies and systems that philanthropy seeks to change.

DEEPLY DIVIDED ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Even organizations that seek the same results don't always see eye to eye, and the advocacy world is no exception. In Colorado, this problem came to a head when advocacy groups Atlantic had funded to get the death penalty repealed were caught off guard by the governor's refusal to support the repeal. Relationships among the advocacy groups soured, while valuable time ebbed away. In the end, Atlantic had to stop payments to the advocacy grantees, reevaluate the options, and create a brand-new advocacy entity to manage philanthropic support for the strategy.

SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIP AND RESULTS THROUGH PERSONNEL CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT

At most levels of government, employees who have influence over policies and funding change positions frequently. The consequences range from frustrating to dire: In Oakland, California, a Joint Powers Authority (JPA), which comprises all local elected and appointed officials who touch the lives of children, played an important role in foundation-supported policy change. After years of stability, a hotly contested mayoral election and turnover of top leaders in county government left the JPA's fate in question. "We

SUCCESS FACTORS

Cultivation of long-term personal relationships

Synergy and alignment between government and philanthropic interests

Negotiation of the relationship's goals, scope, focus, and processes

Combination of multiple interventions into one policy-change agenda

Flexibility and adaptiveness

Local staffing by senior-level philanthropic staff

Champions

almost had to reinvent it," recalls Andrea Youngdahl, director of Oakland's Department of Human Services. And in Bermuda, after much advocacy supported by philanthropy, a newly created ministry for health and seniors disappeared after government leadership changed hands.

Nearly every interviewee in every country expressed a version of the challenge stated by this person: "You can invest a huge amount of time in developing a relationship with a pivotal person, and if that person moves off you have to reestablish the relationship." Because institutional memories are short, constant rebuilding is necessary even in relatively small political environments. Turnover among elected and appointed officials also points to the value of building knowledge and support among government's permanent staff.

LACK OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR NONPROFITS' ROLE IN DELIVERING SERVICES

Philanthropy's heavy use of grants to nonprofit organizations to advocate for changes in policies and implement changes in practice underscores the essential role that nonprofits and non-governmental organizations play in efforts to produce social change. As Bermuda's Myra Virgil points out, however, the nonprofit sector struggles to attract public funding. "There is a role for philanthropy to play to help get back on the agenda what public-sector services are about and how dollars go toward funding them," Virgil says. "It's quite frustrating to know the potential power that could be exercised within the government to implement major social agendas" but isn't because of a disregard for nonprofit organizations.

SOLUTIONS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

What works to avoid or overcome the challenges inherent in philanthropic-government engagement? Interviewees identified the following elements as especially important.

CULTIVATION OF LONG-TERM PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Through direct interaction and by working indirectly through well-connected grantees, Atlantic staff built upon and leveraged long-standing relationships with field leaders, and they constantly sought to cultivate new relationships. Sometimes this meant choosing to support grantees who were laying groundwork with political candidates before they assumed
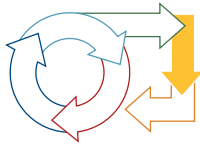
positions of power. In the United States, for example, Atlantic funded immigration advocates who had reached out to Sen. Barack Obama early in his presidential campaign, eventually earning a promise that he would make immigration reform a priority if he won. "The advocates weren't just waiting to play the legislative policy game of introducing bills and fighting it out on the floor [of Congress]. There was a lot of work done to build relationships early on," says evaluator Johanna Morariu.

SYNERGY AND ALIGNMENT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PHILANTHROPIC INTERESTS

Christopher Oechsli calls this "catching a wave" and says Atlantic looks for "environments where governments are open [to engagement], where there is readiness to move." He cites the Irish government's receptiveness to investing in higher education and research as an example of an opportunity "to encourage government to think bigger." (Another example is Atlantic's investments in Australia; see sidebar on next page.)

To catch the wave, private funders have to first understand government's plans and priorities. Says South Africa's Madikizela, "If you design your program without understanding what [government wants], you run the risk of working upstream and you're likely to face real difficulties." Funders also have to consider the extent to which they want to align with the direction government is going versus promote a different policy perspective and goal. In the United States "You cannot tell people who are going one way that you have a little money and you want to go the other way. Scaling and sustaining policy change requires alignment with public-sector priorities in order to leverage significant, recurring public dollars," advises former Programme Head Naomi Post.

This may be one place where a philanthropy's values come into play. Madikizela observes that the governmental relationships that Atlantic and its partners established in South Africa were "informed and driven by our mutual interest in addressing past injustices and inequity. Once government realizes one's commitment to that aspiration, you have a foot in the door."

NEGOTIATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP'S GOALS, SCOPE, FOCUS, AND PROCESSES

In philanthropic-government relations, comfort with engagement comes from knowing up front what it seeks to accomplish, what it will consist of, how broadly or narrowly it will reach, who will be responsible for what, and how any concerns will be resolved. Atlantic staff and grantees

CATCHING A WAVE: ALIGNING WITH EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA

Between 1998 and 2016, Chuck Feeney and The Atlantic Philanthropies invested more than $500 million in Australia, leveraging additional funds from government and private partners for a combined value of more than $2 billion. Unlike in other countries where Atlantic engaged with government to address specific issues or themes—an approach usually driven by theory and strategy—Atlantic's investments in Australia focused on capital projects, which lent themselves to the opportunistic approach of Atlantic's founder. As a recent analysis states, this type of engagement was driven by "relatively organic connections, guided by [Chuck's] small band of close associates, his entrepreneurial eye for a high-value opportunity, and his predilection for 'big bet' opportunities." In other words, the ability to catch a wave.

The majority of Atlantic's investments in Australia were designed to improve capacity for medical research, health, and higher education—directions that were already emerging in 1992 when Feeney began spending time in Australia. The country's budding biotech industry had produced promising work in molecular biology, vaccine research, and cancer immunotherapies, leading the government to establish federal cooperative research centres where scientists could share their knowledge, at places like Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR); but the work was growing at a faster pace than facilities could accommodate.

So Atlantic made a $10 million challenge grant to the University of Queensland for an Institute of Molecular Biology and a $20 million challenge grant to QIMR for a Cancer Research Center. Over the next 14 years, these investments and others persuaded the Queensland government to contribute more than $461 million of public money, resulting in development of the Queensland Brain Institute, the Australian Institute for Bio-Engineering and Nanotechnology, and the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation. Atlantic made comparable biotech investments in Victoria, co-funded with government and the sponsoring organizations, to support Melbourne's Baker Heart Research Institute, the University of Melbourne's Bio21 Molecular Science and Biotechnology Institute, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, and the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute. And in New South Wales, Atlantic co-funded with government and major institutions to support the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, the Kirby Institute for Infection and Immunity in Society, and the Menzies Research Institute Tasmania.

Although the biotech industry was already growing when Feeney came to Australia, Atlantic used engagement with government to build the momentum. And to support future waves of opportunity beyond The Atlantic Philanthropies' lifetime, Feeney and Atlantic worked to foster the culture and practice of philanthropy in Australia. Key investments, made in partnership with government and other private trusts, included support for a National Centre of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies at Queensland University; research into the barriers and incentives that shape philanthropy in Australia; development of a book on philanthropic policy making; and creation of a center designed to encourage corporate giving.

Adapted from Gibbs, S. (Forthcoming),
The Atlantic Philanthropies in Australia,
The Atlantic Philanthropies
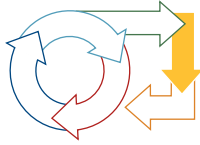
negotiated these decisions in various ways. In the Republic of Ireland, they were addressed case by case and documented in memoranda of understanding. In Northern Ireland, Atlantic established an agreement with the Northern Ireland Executive that outlined joint decision-making and funding processes for several policy and program activities designed to tackle poverty and exclusion. The agreement designated roles for high-level government officials and established a review board that monitors the collaboration's signature programs and provides a means for resolving disagreements.[47] Both techniques provided useful clarity and leverage.

COMBINATION OF MULTIPLE INTERVENTIONS INTO ONE POLICY-CHANGE AGENDA

In Northern Ireland, Atlantic and its partners linked early childhood prevention and intervention services, dementia care, and shared education into one effort called Delivering Social Change. Their purpose was to require government to advance policy on all three issues, which Atlantic believed were inextricably connected, and to promote systemic rather than symptomatic solutions. Padraic Quirk credits this strategy with ensuring that the Northern Ireland government paid attention to dementia, which was far down on officials' list of priorities at the time. "If we were to have given them a choice, they probably would have said they got the other two issues but didn't want to think about dementia—it was just too difficult," Quirk says. Moreover, because Atlantic and the Northern Ireland government had created a program review board, if the government failed to address dementia its philanthropic partners could mobilize the board to deliver consequences for the other two strands of work.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTIVENESS

Sometimes the key to engaging productively is to cut your partners some slack and "do something we would normally prefer not to do to get round a barrier and show good faith," says Northern Ireland's Peter Boyd. "Then when we come to another barrier, we can say, 'We flexed for you there; can you flex for us here?'" For example, the public sector's accountability requirements for expenditures are stricter than philanthropy's, which narrows the scope of things for which government partners can spend public money. In the case of Northern Ireland's shared education department, Atlantic became a sort of broker for financial support coming from various parts of the government that couldn't seem to work with each other without a third party leveraging the interaction. Being flexible is an amorphous skill with few rules, Boyd says: "You have to play it by ear, day to day."
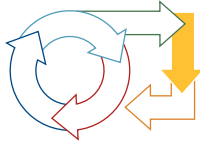
"What we do in Viet Nam is never against the government, it's helping the government achieve its own goals."

Le Nhan Phuong, Country Director, Viet Nam

LOCAL STAFFING BY SENIOR-LEVEL PHILANTHROPIC STAFF

For philanthropies operating in geographies far from their home base, it helps to have local staff who are "of the place" and can represent the philanthropy at a high level while also interpreting local culture and context to colleagues back home. Government officials also may be more comfortable engaging with philanthropies that have such staff.
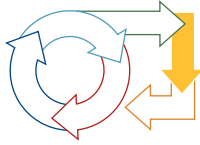
CHAMPIONS

High-level government officials and staff—elected and appointed officials, department and agency heads, policy advisors, and the like—play a vital role in sponsoring, promoting, and shepherding policy initiatives and removing or resolving barriers. In Bermuda, for instance, after philanthropic partners did the legwork to design a program for addressing education and race, it was a cabinet secretary who ushered a joint funding initiative "through the back end of government processes to make sure we got approval for funding," Myra Virgil says. Sometimes government leaders demonstrate their support by providing policy staff. Having a high-level policy person "who can also think, conduct research, and see it through" was invaluable to Atlantic's senior transportation policy initiative in Bermuda, according to Virgil.

Local champions who feel a strong sense of ownership and support can help policy-change efforts move farther and faster. "Local" can be defined in many ways: at the city, county, or even state level in the United States, and in terms of cities, regions, or provinces in other countries. In the U.S., Annmarie Benedict says, a "governor strategy" is crucial for matters controlled at the state level, such as the death penalty: "Philanthropies don't have enough money to push something through just to show that legislators will vote for it; to change policy, the governor has to be on board, too." (And if a governor isn't ready to support the change, adds Benedict's colleague Kavitha Mediratta, it's also important to figure out what more can be done to move his or her position.)

In other places even more local ownership is essential, says Le Nhan Phuong:

> We can't appear to be an outsider coming in and telling government what to do—our ideas would immediately be labeled as imperialist, colonialist. We can't say we know the answer; the answer has to be

arrived at by the people within the system. So we really have to find a local champion….What we do in Viet Nam is never against the government, it's helping the government achieve its own goals.

Having a champion outside government is as important as having one on the inside, and many philanthropies are well-suited to play this role. The catch, however, is to ensure that the first philanthropic champion isn't also the last. "The challenge we started to see is that once a [champion] steps up, sometimes that becomes a reason for others not to step up. They either feel it's taken care of or they have ego involved," an interviewee said. "So you have to find people in the philanthropic sector who can provide leadership but make it an inclusive role."

One enduring theme in these examples of engagement is that no single strategy or approach provides all of the successes or avoids all of the challenges. Philanthropic-government engagement occurs on many levels and in many forms, and often it is the combination of types of engagement that leads to successful outcomes. By investing in many types of engagement simultaneously and then connecting them, philanthropic and government partners can advance solutions more quickly.[J]

A second theme is that the broad spectrum of potential strategies and approaches offers many options for engagement—and for learning. As a case study of work on school discipline reform found:[48]

> An aligned and coordinated effort between philanthropy and the public sector involves more than merely co-funding a project or arranging for philanthropy to pay for something initiated by the government. Philanthropic leaders who help to define a shared goal and develop a structure for ongoing dialogue and decision making can redirect energy and resources on both sides in highly effective ways, while government leaders who partner with philanthropy can sometimes make progress faster and farther than when working alone.

[J] For more on this theme, see: *Tilling the Field: Lessons About Philanthropy's Role in School Discipline Reform* and Philanthropy Working with Government: A Case Study of The Atlantic Philanthropies' Partnership with the Irish Government.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ABOUT SUCCESS FACTORS

What are government (or philanthropy)'s goals and vision for change? How do those priorities align with ours?

Do we and government (or philanthropy) agree on the goals, scope, and focus of our combined effort? Would we or they feel more comfortable codifying our agreements formally in an MOU?

Is this situation, do we need rigid adherence to the plan or can we be flexible? What would be the short- and long-term benefits and drawbacks of flexibility?

Have we selected local staff who can represent us to high-level partners and interpret local culture and context accurately?

Who are our champions, within and outside government, and at various levels of authority?

Concluding Thoughts

There is no doubt that cross-sector engagement increases the complexity of policy change for all parties involved. But there also is no doubt that philanthropic-government engagement adds value on both sides. Government representatives describe philanthropic involvement as "motivating" and "invigorating," while philanthropic collaborators say it is "powerful" and "essential." With that basic assessment as a starting point, we offer these final thoughts about philanthropic-government engagement and the implications of Atlantic's experience for other funders.

VALUES MATTER

They influence when, how, and on what topics government and philanthropy engage. They determine how deep the engagement goes and how long it lasts. And, consequently, values shape the results that engagement can achieve. The values that are most likely to hold collaborators to their "True North" are those that govern outcomes and interactions; in Atlantic's case, these were the values encompassing modesty and humility. As Christopher Oechsli stated in an interview for *Generosity Magazine*, "Effective philanthropy cannot be about the donor….The grantees and beneficiaries in the community are the primary drivers of the work."[49] The takeaway: Understand both parties' values, especially those governing goals and relationships, and incorporate them explicitly into the engagement.

ENGAGEMENT IS BILATERAL

Philanthropy tends to think it can influence government to change while remaining untouched itself. In reality, however, philanthropy and government both have to make some concessions. Philanthropy sometimes has to adopt government's framework to get things done, whether this is as straightforward as using government's procurement process instead of handpicking a grantee or as nuanced as actually becoming a grantee

of government (as in the U.S. Social Innovation Fund).ᴷ Doing so can challenge the philanthropy's practices and relationships, so it is imperative for collaborators to step back periodically and reassess whether the wins are worth the tradeoffs, and whether either partner has gone too far in compromising its values.

ENGAGEMENT DOES NOT NECESSARILY IMPLY COMPLETE AGREEMENT

"Alignment" is probably a more appropriate term for the relationship. As Tony Proscio notes in an analysis of Atlantic's relationship with another foundation that is comparable to philanthropic-government relationships, and as several people reiterated in interviews, "The goals of collaborating institutions do not need to be identical but they should be similar, especially on fundamental principles."[50] Consequently, both parties may have to set thresholds for the level of agreement they require to engage with each other.

THERE IS NO ONE "RIGHT" WAY FOR THE SECTORS TO ENGAGE

Philanthropic-government engagement occurs on a spectrum from formal to informal and direct to indirect. On this spectrum, there is plenty of room for different perspectives and levels of comfort. In fact, success usually lies in a combination of roles, relationships, strategies, and activities, each of which calls for a different set of skills and capacities and allows for a different perception of the philanthropy or government's role.

THINKING STRATEGICALLY MAY BE THE GREATEST BENEFIT OF ENGAGEMENT

The greatest benefit from philanthropic-government engagement may come from thinking strategically, not just programmatically or tactically. Strategic thinking focuses on achieving an overall goal or outcome, while programmatic or tactical thinking tends to focus on the outputs of one discrete intervention. Strategic thinking in philanthropic-government engagement focuses collaborators on how to solve the underlying problem, not just its symptoms, and how to institutionalize the solution to achieve scale and sustainability.

CROSS-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT ISN'T FOR EVERYONE OR EVERY ISSUE

In addition to the skills and capacities listed in Chapter 4, engagement calls for an adventurous mindset and an ability to think broadly—not only about one's own field but about the many other sectors and contexts that influence it and the many tools available to bring disparate players together successfully. And, in the United States and Ireland, philanthropic collaborators

have to be comfortable with the fact that, once their funds mix with public dollars, their interactions may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, which requires federal agencies to disclose information about them if requested by the public.

Moreover, some issues, in some contexts, may not lend themselves to productive engagement. (Atlantic's Northern Ireland staff, for example, carefully chose specific issues from within their broader array of initiatives, targeting those that had the best chance for success—such as shared education from the larger peace-and-reconciliation portfolio. Interviewees say that engagement with Northern Ireland's government would not have worked for some other human rights issues.) In these situations, engagement can't be forced.

ENGAGEMENT DOESN'T—OR SHOULDN'T—NECESSARILY END WHEN A POLICY CHANGE IS ACHIEVED

In fact, philanthropic engagement with government can be just as useful and necessary for implementing the change, monitoring the quality of implementation, and evaluating impact. As an Atlantic grantee wrote in a recent review of research on public-sector policy change, "Implementation is often neglected in practice, and implementation failures are frequently cited as the cause of policy failure or lack of success."

Perhaps the final takeaway is this: Cross-sector engagement to address major social needs is doable and need not be a scary undertaking for collaborators either in philanthropy or government. So we should exploit all of the tools and opportunities available to foundations, donors, and governments to work with and alongside each other. Set a goal, study the context, build the relationships, select the strategies—and then just do it. The path is not always easy. But as one collaborator has said, "The road to lasting solutions begins with the courage to ask the right questions." With the cost of social injustice so high, and philanthropic-government engagement's potential to resolve the underlying issues so great, perhaps the right question is not "How can we possibly do this?" but "How can we *not* do it?"

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