



Government Partnerships & Engagement



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The Atlantic Philanthropies

Atlantic Insights

Government Partnerships & Engagement

BY LEILA FIESTER



Atlantic Founder Chuck Feeney (left) and Christopher G. Oechsli, Atlantic president and CEO

Foreword

PARTNERING AND ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT

CHRISTOPER G. OECHSLI, PRESIDENT AND CEO, THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES

he common quest of all who seek to achieve lasting improvements in our communities and in our world—whether we are individual donors, foundations, nonprofits, or government agencies—is to make the highest and best use of our resources. It requires us to ask questions like: What are our best opportunities to make a difference? What impact can we have and how do we know what impact our grants are having? What are grantee organizations accomplishing? What's working... what's not? Or, as Chuck Feeney, founder of The Atlantic Philanthropies, never hesitated to ask, starting with the foundation's first grants in 1982: What will we have to show for it?

As we near the end of our organization's life, and have fully committed our endowment and will close our doors for good by 2020, we're not asking those questions to guide our work. Instead, we're asking what we learned after making \$8 billion in grants in Australia, Bermuda, Cuba, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United States, and Viet Nam* that might be useful to current and future donors and to leaders and staff of other funders and nonprofit organizations.

That's the purpose of this volume and others in our *Insights* series. From interviews with staff and grantees, a deep examination of records, and case studies of individual projects and initiatives, we've asked journalists and program evaluators to assemble information, reflections, and observations that we hope others can apply to their work.

Each *Insights* volume covers a topic that we believe is distinctive of the work Atlantic has engaged in and that we are well-suited to explore, especially from our vantage point as a limited-life foundation. While we were richly endowed with assets, the fact we only had a set number of years to deploy them helps explain why we have been fixated, with some urgency, on answering the question: "What will we have to show for our work?"

^{*}For more on Atlantic's global activities, go to: www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/global-reach.

For nearly the first half of our life, much of where and what to invest in often followed Chuck Feeney's personal explorations for what he called "ripe opportunities," especially ones representing a convergence of promising ideas and good people to implement them. After Chuck and the Atlantic Board made the decision in 2002 to commit all grant funds by the end of 2016, the foundation developed a more strategic approach, focusing primarily on four program areas: Children & Youth, Aging, Human Rights and Reconciliation, and Population Health, together with a Founding Chairman's program that supported Chuck's entrepreneurial initiatives.*

While these "opportunity-driven" and "strategic" approaches may differ in their framing, both reflected a consistency of underlying values, desired outcomes, and an effort to make a long-term difference that would influence institutions, systems and governments and, in so doing, multiply the return on the investment.

As a result, Atlantic's investments helped: Catalyze the advancement of knowledge economies in the Republic of Ireland and Australia. Hasten the end of the juvenile death penalty. Support grassroots campaigns to help win passage of and implement the U.S. Affordable Care Act and reduce the number of children without health insurance in the United States. Bring peace to Northern Ireland. Secure life-saving medication for millions afflicted with HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Reduce racial disparities in destructive zero-tolerance school discipline policies. Enable Viet Nam to develop a more equitable system for delivering health care throughout the country. Change U.S. policy with Cuba.

The approaches, strategies, and tactics we used that contributed to those and other Atlantic achievements over the years are examined, highlighted, and analyzed in our individual *Insights*.

This volume, for instance, explores how Atlantic engaged with different governments around the world to ensure that public systems and services respond to the needs of all people, including the most vulnerable. As author Leila Fiester notes, "Government Partnerships & Engagement" describes and discusses "what Atlantic, its consultants, and grantees did in a variety of geographies, how and why they chose one option over another, and what happened. It breaks down the core elements of effective engagement ... and it includes comments about what participants might have done differently, given the benefit of hindsight."

Working with government is something that Chuck Feeney saw as a mutually beneficial relationship from his earliest days as a philanthropist, and as this

^{*}For more on the background, history, and grantmaking associated with each of these programs, visit Atlantic's website: www.atlanticphilanthropies.org

Insights shows, became infused into much of Atlantic's work over the years. It's also a practice that some other contemporary philanthropists have made central to their work. Bill Gates, for example, recently told *Time* magazine, "Almost everything our foundation does is in partnership with the U.S. government."

In other *Insights*, we detail how Chuck Feeney's belief in "Giving While Living" influenced how he approached his philanthropy, what it was like to operate as a limited-life foundation, how we supported groups working to change harmful or unfair laws or public policies through advocacy or by seeking legal remedies in the courts. We also examine how our investments of more than \$2.8 billion in capital projects helped advance our mission of building a better world.

Taken together, our *Insights* reflect the result of the work of nearly 2,000 grantees, 300 Atlantic staff and directors, and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of formal and informal consultants, experts, friends, and inspirational people. We wrestled with whether and how to express this experience without unduly claiming responsibility for insights and successes that represent the contribution of many, both inside the foundation and outside Atlantic. In the end, and with due acknowledgment to and respect for Chuck and for his sense of privacy, modesty, and anonymity, we felt some responsibility to those who wanted to know more about what and how Atlantic did what it did. Our goal for these *Insights* — and for the materials we are collecting on our website and in our archives, which are being housed at Cornell University—is to contribute to the thinking and choices of others in philanthropy and in fields related to our work. We hope that, in some form, our knowledge and experiences will help advance the efforts of others working to improve people's lives in meaningful and lasting ways.

It's also important to note that regardless of the topic of the individual *Insights*, the thread running through them all is the recognition that all that Atlantic accomplished over the years was possible only because of Chuck Feeney's decision nearly four decades ago to endow his foundation with virtually his entire personal fortune. That action, unprecedented at the time, grew out of Chuck's basic sense of fairness and his deep desire to improve the lives of those who lack opportunity, who are undervalued or who are unfairly treated. As Chuck himself once said: "I had one idea that never changed in my mind—that you should use your wealth to help people."

Helping people—that's been Atlantic's work. We hope these *Insights* will inform and inspire others in their own endeavors to deploy wealth effectively to improve the lives of others.



Atlantic deployed a variety of strategies, approaches to engage government in ensuring that public systems and services respond to the needs of all people, including the most vulnerable.

Overview

hilanthropy's many tools for improving social outcomes and achieving impact include the ability to partner and engage with government—to work with, alongside, against, or around government leaders and agencies to change public systems, services, and policies. It's a tool that some philanthropies use frequently and others not at all. For The Atlantic Philanthropies, engagement with government was a vital part of efforts to provide all people with opportunity, dignity, and equity.

In the eight places where Atlantic invested globally between 1982 and 2016 (Australia, Bermuda, Cuba, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United States, and Viet Nam), the foundation's donor, staff, grantees, and other philanthropic partners worked closely with elected representatives, appointed officials, and the leaders and staff of public agencies and programs to achieve key goals. The shape of those engagements varied across 35 years (see page 9), but the importance of these philanthropic–government engagements remained constant. It became a hallmark of many of Atlantic's philanthropic strategies and a major factor in the foundation's successes and challenges.

Atlantic's perspective on engagement is shaped by the foundation's three overarching objectives: (1) promoting and enhancing opportunities for people 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. All of those goals would be difficult, if not impossible, to pursue without engaging with government in some way.

For Atlantic, engagement with government was vital to its efforts to provide all people with opportunity, dignity, and equity.

As Atlantic's work comes to an end and participants reflect on their experiences, insights about creating, deploying, leveraging, and sustaining philanthropic—government relations have emerged. This volume describes three cases in which Atlantic engaged with government: in the United States to keep students off the school-to-prison pipeline by reforming punitive and unfair school discipline policies, in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to improve life outcomes by providing preventive and early intervention services to young children, and in Viet Nam to pass a life-saving law that mandated that people riding motorbikes wear helmets. While insights from each of the cases featured in the report are specific to the places where Atlantic did its grantmaking, we believe that collectively they may offer guidance to people who want to know more about the why and how behind this work.

That said, this is not a how-to volume. Rather than being prescriptive, it offers direction by example, pointing out what Atlantic, its consultants, and grantees did in a variety of situations and geographies, how and why they chose one option over another, and what happened as a result. It breaks down the core elements of effective engagement as viewed through the eyes of people implementing Atlantic projects "on the ground." And it includes comments about what participants might have done differently, given the benefit of hindsight.

The purpose of this volume is to help people in philanthropy and in government learn what can be accomplished through mutual engagement.

Also, this report builds on two other documents: *Roles of Engagement* (www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/roles-report), which describes the landscape of strategies and tactics that Atlantic used to establish, cultivate, and deploy government relations globally; and *Reflections on Engagement* (www.atlantic-philanthropies.org/reflections-report), which distills big-picture lessons from the landscape scan. All three documents were written by independent consultant Leila Fiester, based on original interviews conducted in 2015–2016 with more than two dozen Atlantic staff, grantees, evaluators, and former government representatives; and a review of other reports and evaluations of Atlantic initiatives. We offer the insights in this volume as part of Atlantic's commitment to reflecting on its experiences and sharing knowledge from them with others. Our goal is to help people in philanthropy, including individual donors and their advisors and foundation leaders and staff, become better informed about what mutual engagement can accomplish for both sectors and for the populations that both serve.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "ENGAGEMENT"?

This volume defines "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 nongovernmental 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, to name just a few.

Engagement between private funders and the public sector is a multifaceted process.

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.





"When people think about public/ private partnership, they assume it's a lock-step arrangement. But we were operating from a movement frame. We needed lots of different voices and roles that were headed in the same direction. That's what we were trying to galvanize and support."

Kavitha Mediratta, from Tilling the Field: Lessons about Philanthropy's Role in School Discipline Reform

School Discipline Reform in the United States

n January 2014, the U.S. Attorney General and U.S. Secretary of Education released joint policy guidance designed to eliminate excessive, discriminatory—so-called "zero-tolerance"—school disciplinary practices. The release of a policy solution marked a high point in years of effort by leaders within the government, education, juvenile justice, advocacy, civic, and philanthropic sectors to achieve a shared goal. Atlantic, one of those participants, had invested almost \$47 million between 2010 and 2014 to raise awareness of the need for school discipline reform, test and disseminate alternatives, and build pressure for policy change at the state, local, and national levels.

For years, the harsh punishments permitted under zero-tolerance policies in public schools across the nation had been damaging the lifetime educational, social, economic, and civil rights of generations of public school students, primarily those of color. In 2007, almost half (49 percent) of all African-American high school students had been suspended at least once at some point in their school experience, a much larger percentage than that of Hispanic (26 percent), white (18 percent), or Asian/Pacific Islander (13 percent) students. Many of these suspensions and expulsions were triggered by relatively minor infractions that teachers and school administrators have discretion to address in other ways. According to 2006 figures, more than 3.3 million (out of a total 49.3 million) elementary and secondary school students nationally were suspended annually, double the rate suspended 30 years earlier.

Atlantic's investments in school discipline reform totaled about \$47 million between 2010 and 2014.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT THIS CASE ILLUSTRATES

Formal partnerships (for example, co-funding a program with other foundations and the U.S. Department of Justice)

Informal alliances 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 build widespread demand for policy change

Direct relationships between Atlantic staff and allies in the federal departments of justice and education

Indirect influence through grantee coalitions, nonprofits, and nongovernmental organizations

"Inside/outside" approach — at the same time philanthropy supported government it also pushed it to change

Efforts to amplify grassroots voices

Working at the city, state, and national levels

Philanthropy serving as government's catalyst, thought leader, convener, connector

Philanthropy investing in research, data, and evidence

Combination of strategies including policy advocacy, research, demonstration projects, legislative/administrative reforms, and capacity building

WHY SCHOOL DISCIPLINE REFORM?

When Atlantic leaders identified school discipline reform as an investment opportunity in 2009, they knew it would require intense engagement with and around government because the public sector controls U.S. public schools. The topic also resonated with Atlantic's commitments to education, equity, and improving the lives of vulnerable populations. And it was an issue on which Atlantic could reasonably expect to make an impact within half a dozen years, the amount of time left in the philanthropy's limited life.

Former Atlantic program staff member Kavitha Mediratta and consultant Tanya Coke, who together launched the foundation's school discipline reform work, originally framed it as a way to improve educational opportunities for the nation's most vulnerable children and to keep them out of the juvenile and criminal justice systems, sometimes called the "school-to-prison pipeline." Their strategy was to create an environment conducive to policy reform by (a) generating a national movement of grassroots and legal advocates,

educators, and justice leaders that would simultaneously put pressure on education, judicial, and governmental systems and offer support for reforms; (b) cultivating awareness and knowledge of the harms of zero-tolerance discipline while at the same time highlighting alternative policies and practices that keep children in school; and (c) building a new public narrative of excessive school suspensions as a dysfunctional and racially discriminatory practice that threatens educational attainment.

For years, zero-tolerance policies had been damaging the lifetime educational, social, economic, and civil rights of generations of students, primarily those of color.

HOW DID ATLANTIC ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT?

Atlantic staff used the Foundation's resources and influence to accelerate and amplify the collective efforts of other donors also working on the issue, including the Open Society Foundations, OSI-Baltimore (OSF's field office, which was also an Atlantic grantee), the California Endowment, the Edward W. Hazen Foundation, the Schott Foundation for Public Education (also a grantee), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, NoVo Foundation, and an anonymous donor. As thought partners as well as co-funders, the philanthropies played different roles—some building momentum for policy change within local and state education agencies and others organizing youth and parent advocacy, partnering with the teachers' unions, or connecting with leaders in the federal government. The combined effort added up to something more than any one philanthropy could achieve on its own.

Similarly, Atlantic cultivated relationships with and among its grantee organizations by holding regular conversations involving philanthropy staff, nonprofit and advocacy leaders, and federal partners. These conversations created a conduit for information, ideas, and strategies about how to improve school discipline policies to flow to and from government representatives.

Reframing the problem was another important step toward engaging government leaders in the need for change. How a problem is framed communicates a lot about what the underlying values are and how the issue fits within a broader vision or goal. When Atlantic entered the school discipline field, proponents of zero tolerance were framing it as a way to keep well-behaving children safe in school. Many educators thought of school discipline as "a criminal justice

issue playing out in schools," rather than an issue that was fundamentally about "who gets to be in the classroom and how their development and growth is supported." Opponents of zero-tolerance discipline, meanwhile, positioned it as a racially biased, unjust practice that fed the school-to-prison pipeline.²

To broaden the frame, funders supported the Dignity in Schools Campaign, which views school discipline as a process for deliberately pushing unwanted populations of students out of school. Atlantic also supported the Alliance for Educational Justice, which "links school discipline and push-out to inequitable funding of public education, an overreliance on high-stakes testing, and low levels of academic rigor and expectations in schools" that serve low-income students of color.³ Another Atlantic grantee, the Advancement Project, called for replacing extreme discipline with a common-sense approach that supports students in attending, achieving, and succeeding in school—a frame that helped people realize that most of the harsh discipline being meted out fell outside the bounds of common sense. The New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children, also an Atlantic grantee, framed school discipline as influencing how young people come to view equity, discrimination, and the administration of justice.

The attention to framing and the funders' comfort with several variations on the narrative reflected how collaborating funders thought about alignment with government. "When people think about public/private partnership, they assume it's a lock-step arrangement," Atlantic's Kavitha Mediratta observed in *Tilling the Field: Lessons about Philanthropy's Role in School Discipline Reform*. "But we were operating from a movement frame. We needed lots of different voices and roles that were headed in the same direction. That's what we were trying to galvanize and support."

Central to the statement by Mediratta, who now serves as founding executive director of the Atlantic Fellows for Racial Equity program, is an assumption that the message and debate about the issue should be framed in ways that define a specific problem and unify stakeholders around a set of solutions, but still leave room for allies' individual priorities to coexist.

Opponents of zero-tolerance discipline positioned it as a racially biased, unjust practice that fed the school-to-prison pipeline.

Funders devised an inside/outside strategy that built pressure on policymakers while also supporting government officials and policymakers with data, solutions, and political cover on tough issues. Atlantic and other philanthropies funded advocacy organizations to exert grassroots pressure on school systems and to raise awareness of the issue among school superintendents, school administrators, and juvenile and family court judges. They funded grantees such as: the Just and Fair Schools Fund, which supports organizations and programs in more than 15 states targeting local, state, and national policy change; the School-to-Prison Pipeline Legal Strategies Collaborative (LSC), which provided a space in which Atlantic's legal and civil rights advocacy grantees could safely share confidential materials to help each other fine-tune legal arguments; the Alliance for Educational Justice, a national collective of youth organizing groups that brought students' voices into the debate; and the Dignity in Schools Campaign, an umbrella organization of local youth, parents, educators, grassroots groups, and policy and legal advocacy groups that coordinated and amplified demands for reform through communications, national convenings, and direct federal lobbying.

One group Atlantic supported called for replacing extreme discipline with a common-sense approach that supports students to stay in school.

At the same time that funders were underwriting advocacy, they cultivated allies both within the federal departments of justice and education and in key stakeholder associations. The funders used their influence and connections to arrange meetings and events at which grantees and their grassroots constituents met with federal decision-makers, adding the philanthropies' weight to the other groups' activities and concerns. The Council of State Governments received an Atlantic grant to produce and disseminate a study on Texas's widespread discriminatory school discipline practices, and Atlantic staff used connections with staff within the federal government to arrange a personal presentation of findings to then–U.S. Attorney General Eric

At the same time funders were under-writing advocacy, they cultivated allies within the federal departments of justice and education and in key stakeholder associations.

Holder. Grassroots organizers who received support from the funders brought students and parents to speak at a Senate hearing on the school-to-prison pipeline, while researchers used private funding to document and analyze the state-level crisis that prompted the hearing.

"[Government allies] have to feel there is demand for change and that there is something to say," an interviewee explained in *Tilling the Field*. "We had to tee them up to take bold action but also make sure they knew—because they could see it in the press—that all of our grantees were carrying water for them."

To encourage the federal government to help more state and district governments improve their school discipline policies, private funders invested in local school discipline reform efforts and then supported communication efforts that connected those success stories to the larger national narrative. Atlantic staff initially considered giving large grants to a set of school districts to promote local policy change. But because the average tenure of a school district superintendent in the United States is very short, they instead made grants to help specific places that had already taken significant steps deepen their work and demonstrate positive results. Two examples are described in *Tilling the Field*:

In Baltimore, the city's public school system received support and advocacy from Open Society Institute-Baltimore (OSI)—some funded by Atlantic—to revise its code of conduct to include a sequence of specific consequences for student infractions, including options other than suspension. With its own resources and support from Atlantic, OSI leveraged the progress in Baltimore to persuade the state board and department of education to develop new state-wide regulations governing school discipline. OSI-Baltimore staff testified alongside advocates, including the Maryland Disability Law Center, ACLU, Advocates for Children and Youth, and the Advancement Project, in favor of new regulations, facilitated a committee to draft the regulations, and formed a work group to examine a narrow set of contested issues more closely. The groundbreaking regulations were approved in 2014, after two years of work.

In Los Angeles, a coalition of civil rights groups funded by The California Endowment and Atlantic, and spearheaded by the Community Rights Campaign (CRC) of the Labor Community Strategy Center, secured a package of reforms to reduce arrests, citations and ticketing of students for truancy in the LA public schools. The allies later joined with another coalition to win passage of new policy ending suspensions for willful defiance and requiring the use of alternative disciplinary practices, including restorative justice, to improve school climate and help all students achieve academic goals.

The funders then gave these grantees' work extra prominence, funding the Advancement Project to convene "action camps" where grassroots organizers learned from each other how to collect data, work with school boards, and change local codes of conduct. Atlantic also funded a communications firm to work with grantees on media outreach so that events and research going on across the country would feed into a larger narrative on rethinking school discipline. By connecting the dots between the successes, Atlantic and its partners were able to tell a story that was bigger than what was happening in any one district.

Grassroots organizers arranged for students and parents to speak at a Senate hearing on the school-to-prison pipeline, while researchers used private funding to document and analyze the state-level crisis that prompted the hearing.

Atlantic and other private funders also commissioned research studies and advocacy to give government allies the data needed to justify policy reforms. To amplify the reach and impact of the research, Atlantic funded communications firms and media organizations to preview, release, and disseminate the findings through media campaigns and public events. These activities took information that had the imprimatur of academia and connected it with a media vehicle, giving the findings more visibility to people both within and outside government.

WHAT HAPPENED AS A RESULT OF THE ENGAGEMENT?

The federal government took a stronger stand in supporting school discipline reform, due largely to greater public awareness of the issue and deeper knowledge of its impact, fueled by the research, advocacy, and communications funded by philanthropy. In addition to the joint policy guidance on school discipline the federal government issued in 2014, examples of government actions included: the Supportive School Discipline Initiative, a collaborative project of the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, in 2011, to support better school discipline policies; inclusion of school discipline as a priority in My Brother's Keeper, an initiative of President Barack Obama that aimed to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color; a \$1.9 million effort by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to institutionalize a school-justice project initiated by the National Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges with funds from Atlantic and other foundations; a School Climate Transformation Grants program at the U.S. Department of Education, designed to help more than 1,000 schools train teachers and other school staff to implement strategies that improve school climate and culture; and a U.S. Department of Justice initiative, in partnership with the Southern District of Ohio, to convene more than 175 cross-system stakeholders—judges, magistrates, teachers, principals, probation officers, and police—to discuss ways of keeping children in school and out of court.

Gains at the state level were even greater. By the time Atlantic phased down its engagement with government on this issue in 2015, 14 states had passed legislation or institute regulations to improve school discipline practices, and three states had passed comprehensive reforms.

But some gaps in Atlantic's strategy also emerged. One was the limited progress made on addressing the issue of school-based policing. Looking back in 2015 on the array of activities that Atlantic funded, Mediratta observed that more could have been done to help superintendents and principals understand and assess the role police officers play in their schools and the training they need. "I wish we had moved more quickly to engage that constituency," she said. Mediratta expressed the same regret about not engaging more with charter schools, a growing segment of the education sector, and with teachers.

Atlantic funded communications firms and media organizations to preview, release, and disseminate research findings through media campaigns and public events.



One Atlantic grantee worked on framing school discipline as influencing how young people come to view equity, discrimination and the administration of justice.



Opponents of zero-tolerance discipline positioned it as a racially biased practice that fed the school-to-prison pipeline.

TAKEAWAYS

Successful engagement with government on school discipline reform encompassed more than co-funding a project or arranging for philanthropy to pay for something initiated by the government. The results of Atlantic's work can be attributed to the foundation co-developing strategies and products with grantees that advanced the cause, becoming a highly visible champion, brokering relationships between decision-makers in different sectors, funding research and communications, facilitating meetings and discussions, and searching out and contributing new ideas.

Putting pressure on government while also partnering or aligning with it accelerated the pace and scale of policy change because public leaders were more likely to change policy when prompted by widespread public demand and media coverage. Especially promising tactics included Atlantic's funding for grassroots advocacy and its sponsorship of national events highlighting the extent of the problem—followed by support for grantee organizations to follow up in states and communities. While the outside pressure on government was significant, it was not always adversarial. As Mediratta explained in the companion to this report, *Roles of Engagement*, "You always have to calibrate pressure tactics to what you need strategically to win."

Data were a powerful lever for gaining government's attention and action. The new research and findings supported by philanthropy created a compelling, evidence-based argument that paved the way for policy change and gave government a rationale for taking specific actions.

The effort to broker introductions and facilitate collaboration among various entities amplified the results achieved by individual players or sectors. Grantee organizations, other philanthropies, and leaders of separate government systems or agencies all benefited from recognizing the larger context surrounding their engagements and working together when possible. It took deliberate efforts by Atlantic and other funders to create opportunities for different players to convene, communicate, and strategize, however.

By 2015, 14 states had passed legislation or instituted regulations to improve school discipline practices.





"We didn't go out with a blank sheet looking for what we could co-fund with government."

Mary Sutton, Atlantic's Country Director for the Republic of Ireland

Prevention and Early Intervention for Children in Ireland

n the island of Ireland at the start of this century, most children and young people who faced health, social, or developmental challenges did not receive services until their problems were full-blown and persistent. There were relatively few early childhood programs, and their standards varied greatly. Treatments tended to be "reactive, punitive, costly, and of doubtful value," as one evaluation found. From 2004–2013, Atlantic invested \$162.6 million to help shift services for the most vulnerable children and young people from reactive forms of treatment to an approach that features prevention and early intervention—stopping problems from arising in the first place or keeping them from getting worse. In the process, Atlantic sought to strengthen the skills of service providers, stabilize the child- and youth-serving field, and "amplify the voice of children" through advocacy to influence public policy. 8

Atlantic made it a priority to ensure that those most in need received high-quality services.

Government engagement in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland was crucial to this work for two reasons: There are relatively few philanthropic partners on the island of Ireland, and the new approach to children's services could not be mainstreamed or sustained without the governments' political and financial support.

By the end of 2016, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland committed more than \$100 million to institutionalize the most effective prevention and early intervention programs.

In Ireland, Atlantic worked with two governmental departments to co-fund a large-scale, seven-year demonstration of services called the "Prevention and Early Intervention Programme," and to create a new **Centre for Effective Services**, which helps child- and youth-serving programs to incorporate knowledge of proven, effective practices into their work. Atlantic and the government then co-funded a three-year follow-on effort, the "Area Based Childhood Programme," to continue and replicate evidence-informed interventions after the demonstration period ended.

In Northern Ireland, Atlantic's investment in demonstration projects led the foundation and six government departments in 2014 to co-fund the "Early Intervention Transformation Programme," which aimed to infuse early intervention into the design and delivery of children's services. Atlantic and Northern Ireland's Commissioner for Children and Young People also collaborated to commission a budget analysis of the government's spending on children and young people—the first of its kind in the region—aiming to create a data baseline for future policy-change efforts. Across the island of Ireland, the two governments had committed more than \$100 million by the end of 2016 to institutionalize the most effective prevention and early intervention programs for children and young people.

WHY PREVENTIVE AND EARLY INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN?

In 2003, Atlantic's Board adopted "Children & Youth" as one of the foundation's global program areas. In this, as in other areas, Atlantic made it a priority to ensure that the people most in need received high-quality services through policies and practices that were informed by evidence. At the time Atlantic began to address children's services in Ireland, researchers in several countries had already determined that early intervention and prevention produce more benefits for children and a better return on investment for society, compared with treating problems after they emerge. Governments in several geographies, including the United Kingdom, were beginning to adopt the approach.

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT THIS CASE ILLUSTRATES

Formal partnerships (for example, issuing memoranda of understanding and creating a program oversight board; joint decision-making agreement with government)

Indirect interaction between government and philanthropy, via grantees, as well as establishing direct interactions with government

Philanthropy serving as a **catalyst** for new ideas and producer of evidence (via demonstration programs and evaluation)

Multiple strategies and actions including demonstration projects to spur investment in evidence-based practices, legislative or administrative reforms, efforts to build physical infrastructure and human capacities, and research/evaluation

Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic both presented ripe opportunities for children's services reform. "We didn't go out with a blank sheet looking for what we could co-fund with government," explains Mary Sutton, Atlantic's Country Director for the Republic of Ireland. "Part of it is about riding the wave of opportunities in the work we are doing, either with government or with grantees, where there was a confluence of circumstances that made it the opportune moment to crank up something." On the island of Ireland, those circumstances included a sudden economic downturn in 2007, which pressured government to control spending and prevented it from bringing new resources to engagements with philanthropy. "In this environment, you need to think instead about how resources could be used differently," says Jane Forman, former program executive for Atlantic in the Republic of Ireland. Or, as a policymaker put it to evaluators: "Because of financial reality, we have no choice other than complete service redesign."

In 2011, partly in response to the research and demonstration projects commissioned by Atlantic and the advocacy of Atlantic grantees, the Republic of Ireland's newly elected government established a Department of Children and Youth Affairs and created a full cabinet minister's position to lead the department's policy development and service integration. Elections in Northern Ireland, meanwhile, brought turnover in many ministerial positions. As these new leaders and departments reorganized service delivery, engagement between Atlantic and government offered potential for both sectors to advance their goals.

Evidence shows that early prevention and intervention produce more benefits for children than treating problems after they emerge.

HOW DID ATLANTIC ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT?

To persuade government that a prevention/early intervention approach was worth supporting, Atlantic first took steps to show that it works. Atlantic staff chose a handful of services that, based on research findings and assessment of local needs, were likely to produce good results and funded nongovernmental organizations—ranging from small, local organizations to large, national multi-service entities—to plan, implement, and evaluate them. For example, Barnardo's Northern Ireland, a 100-year-old charity, created and implemented an after-school literacy program that also helped parents support their children's learning. Early Years, Northern Ireland's largest nonprofit for young children, worked with the Peace Initiatives Institute to develop and deliver an anti-bigotry program for three- and four-year-olds. In the Republic of Ireland, the Northside Partnership, a nonprofit serving Dublin's northeast neighborhoods, offered a five-year home visiting program that begins working with families on healthy child development and parenting during pregnancy and continues until the child begins school. Evidence from these initial investments built credibility among people in government who needed to embrace the changes.

Evidence from Atlantic's initial investments in prevention/early intervention programs built credibility among people in government who needed to embrace the changes.

To move the governments to action, Atlantic staff cultivated relationships not only with high-level champions but also mid-level officials and managers. With top government executives, engagement was more "strategic," focused on "how the work you might be advocating would support them in achieving policy objectives," Sutton says. "You probably need more patience when working at the executive level, because decisions don't tend to be taken quickly and the policy agenda doesn't move rapidly. So you're probably looking at engagement that requires an investment of time."

Atlantic staff and grantees also cultivated connections with the mid-level government officials and staff who run programs on a day-to-day basis; these people tend to outlast upper-management leadership changes, and they have

useful firsthand knowledge about challenges to implementing policy. Often, these government representatives feel that people outside the public sector don't understand their dedication, their constraints, the political environment they have to navigate, or how "messy" the relationships among government departments can be. So Atlantic staff set out to overcome that obstacle. "Conveying to them that you are empathetic to that and have experienced it yourself is a really important first base to get to," Sutton says. "Without that, they are naturally suspicious that you have a naïve view of how their world actually is—how ambitious you can afford to be, how quickly things can be done, what will help a civil servant on the other side move things along, and when to pull back from something and accept that it's just not going to fly."

When working at the executive level of government, you have to be prepared for how long it can sometimes take for a policy agenda to move forward.

Atlantic and its grantees cultivated relationships within government mostly through networking skills. As former program executive Forman noted:

You have a lot of conversations around cups of coffee, meeting and talking to people at conferences. Sometimes Atlantic covered the cost for public servants to go to conferences and make study visits, and for us to spend time at the conferences working on relationships and talking about opportunities that might be available for [philanthropy and government] to work together. You have objectives about what you would like to do, and they have objectives, and [in these conversations] you're just trying to find alignment.

To enshrine a collaborative, partnership-based approach and set out clearly the expectations and responsibilities of each side, Atlantic signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with each governmental department responsible for each individual grant in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This was especially useful given that a government executive served as the legal recipient of some Atlantic grants for co-funded projects. The MOUs spelled out each party's responsibilities and specified how much influence the funder would and wouldn't have over government decisions pertaining to the project. Major changes during implementation triggered updates to the MOUs.

"You're not constantly returning to the MOU in your relationship, but it's an important underpinning," Forman explains. "The public sector is exposed to a lot of accountability, so they need the comfort of a piece of paper to say, "This is what we've agreed to, and this is why.'" From the foundation's perspective, an MOU establishes that "[we are] not going to be a silent partner



The 39 interventions and 52 evidence-based services that the initiative funded reached an estimated 90,000 children and young people.

"A memorandum of understanding establishes that we're not going to be a silent partner in this relationship, that [we're] going to want to have an opinion and help make decisions."

Padraic Quirk, Atlantic's former Country Director for Northern Ireland

in this relationship, that [we are] going to want to have an opinion and help make decisions," says former Northern Ireland Country Director Padraic Quirk. "We didn't expect a progress report twice a year, but we showed up to every project update meeting and continually [articulated] the Atlantic position again and again and again."

In Northern Ireland, Atlantic also established an overarching program board to oversee all of its funding in the country. The program board met quarterly, and its members were very senior government officials. The program board could negotiate agreements but did not have legal authority to impose sanctions if one strand of work did not move forward.

Atlantic staff taught grantees how to commission and monitor evaluations.

To improve policies and programs, Atlantic invested in new capacity and infrastructure for the child and youth field to conduct research and disseminate findings. Atlantic required grantee organizations, when possible, to use sophisticated evaluation methodologies including randomized controlled trials or quasi-experimental designs to evaluate their programs. Each grantee received an evaluation budget, which it used to commission studies from local universities or technical institutes. Advisory committees convened by the grantees and including Atlantic staff provided additional expertise, teaching grantee staff how to commission and monitor evaluations, incorporate findings, and halt programs found to be ineffective. Atlantic created a network of service providers and advocates among its grantees, in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, to foster peer learning on relevant topics—such as scientific findings on early brain development, parent engagement, and early life transitions that form the rationale for early intervention. In addition, the Republic and Northern Ireland each formed an independent group of service providers, researchers, and policymakers (funded by Atlantic) that met regularly to exchange ideas and information, discuss concerns, and find ways to connect

Atlantic created a network of service providers and advocates in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to foster peer learning on relevant topics.

their work. And the Center for Effective Services, created with funding from Atlantic, the Republic of Ireland's Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and the Department of Environment, Community, and Local Government, helped grantees across the island translate research into practice and ensured that what grantees learned reached a broad audience.

To sustain and scale up the changes, Atlantic gave the Galway University Foundation \$13.9 million to embed the prevention/early intervention approach into the Republic of Ireland's new, national family support system. Atlantic also sought to expand the benefits of the child and youth initiative by giving the Katharine Howard Foundation \$12.4 million to work on reforming universal health and well-being services for infants and their families.

WHAT HAPPENED AS A RESULT OF THE ENGAGEMENT?

Children and families benefited from the change in practices. The 39 interventions and 52 evidence-based services funded by this initiative reached an estimated 90,000 children and young people, 23,000 parents and caregivers, and 4,000 professionals.

The organizations that provide services learned new ways to improve the lives of children and young adults. They began to consult more with local community members to ensure that the services matched their needs; to collect more data on service demand and supply; to use the data, along with research evidence, to plan, design, and implement programs; and to monitor program fidelity and improvement.

National policy for child and youth services has shifted. The Republic of Ireland's government now supports preventive and early-intervention programs, services, and initiatives for children and young people on an array of topics, from early care and education to mental health. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures 2014–2020*, the Republic's first department-spanning framework for national child policy, incorporates knowledge gained through the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative into its goals and target outcomes. ¹⁰ In Northern Ireland, the government's Strategy for Children and Young People (http://bit.ly/cyp-strategy) includes a focus on early intervention as one of its eight key principles and commits to placing specific emphasis on prevention and early intervention.



Northern Ireland's Strategy for Children and Young People commits to placing specific emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

TAKEAWAYS

Take a systems approach by combining strategies and pursuing several at the same time.

In both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, Atlantic and its grantees worked directly with government and also with the volunteer sector, advocates, and service providers to improve early childhood prevention and intervention services. "All were part of a movement that was trying to shift the system in a particular way," says Jane Forman. "A key thing for me was to take a systems approach: You don't intervene just at one point but at multiple levels, and you try to build a common language around what you're trying to achieve."

In comments to an evaluator, an Irish policymaker echoed Forman's advice: "Think about having a special roundtable series with policymakers around key themes, rather than just [saying], 'You should do this or that program.' [Evaluations] have big policy implications, and that's how they need to be pitched and branded."

[Evaluations] have big policy implications, and that's how they need to be pitched and branded."

Keep foundation dollars for evaluation and learning separate from funds shared with governmental allies or partners. When government has insufficient funding for evaluation, or the procurement process is too cumbersome, or the findings are likely to criticize government policy, the only way to ensure that knowledge gets produced may be for philanthropy to pay for evaluation and learning.

gets produced may be for philanthropy to pay for evaluation and learning. In these situations, keeping evaluation funds separate from those committed to a shared project gives philanthropy control over whether findings are publicly disseminated or quashed. Quirk advises, "Pitch it as learning we all can benefit from, and we [philanthropy] just have the flexibility to get it out to the public. They [government officials] are often lukewarm about the idea, but move it along gently."

Gather and disseminate evidence of a strategy's effectiveness to build support and capacity for change. Having evaluation findings that demonstrated the positive impact of initial prevention and early intervention efforts helped to unlock government support for continuing, replicating, and further improving the programs. The investment in program evaluations beefed up resources at local universities, and involving grantees in conducting evaluations and sharing the

You have to pick the right moment when sharing knowledge. If government representatives don't perceive a need, they might not find it useful. results helped those organizations develop durable skills. Former Republic of Ireland Programme Executive Jane Forman offers several insights about building knowledge and capacities, from Atlantic's funding of research and evaluation in the Irish Republic:

Civil servants are accountable to political systems that might not always be receptive to evaluation, especially if there is a powerful lobbying group advocating for something else to be done. So it wasn't just doing the evaluation that was important but thinking how the learning could be harvested, disseminated, and presented in a way that is useful to policy makers. For example, in the development of children's literacy [initiative], we had the idea that if we got all the key agency and government people who are involved in literacy into a room and discussed the evaluation findings, they'd get excited and make changes. We quickly learned it didn't work that way. They're very busy people, and it's difficult to get them in a room. And it's no use sending large, 200-page evaluation reports; you need to get it down to three or four pages, with very up-front key messages answering the question why it's important to them. So we do a lot of summary documentation and policy briefs.

Timing also matters when sharing knowledge. Government representatives may not be interested if they don't perceive a need for information at the time, Forman says. In a few months, however, public pressure may cause priorities to shift (perhaps in response to advocacy by the philanthropy), and then having the information all ready to go is a boon. "Don't flog a dead horse," she advises. "If you're not getting traction, give it a break and revisit it at a time where people are more receptive."





Before Viet Nam mandated the wearing of motorcycle helmets, the country recorded as many as 14,000 deaths per year—2,000 of them among children—and 30,000 cases of severe brain damage.

Saving Lives with a Helmet Law in Viet Nam

December 15, 2007, the day a new law went into effect mandating that all motorbike riders traveling on any road in Viet Nam wear helmets. Observers across the country were amazed to see a helmet on every head for the first time ever, despite several previous attempts. As noted in the companion report to this *Insight*, *Roles of Engagement: Strategies and Tactics for Philanthropic-Government Relations in Policy Reform*:

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.¹²

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

Funders and grantees seized the opportunity to advance the traffic safety issue at a time when the Vietnamese government was willing to make necessary changes.

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.¹³

How did funders and government work together to finally overcome the obstacles? As this case illustrates, foundations and their grantees took advantage of a favorable context, advancing the issue at a time when the Vietnamese government was willing to make necessary changes and when the national and international stakeholders who provided funding, vision, and leadership were well aligned. They leveraged the support of national and local champions. They mounted a massive public awareness campaign to prepare people for the change. And they engineered solutions to major roadblocks, such as manufacturing helmets that people were more likely to wear.

Atlantic's engagement with government on Viet Nam's helmet law differs in important ways from work it did with other governments, including the other two cases featured in this report. In this instance, Atlantic mostly remained a back-stage participant in the process that led to the creation and implementation of the new law. Even though it did not initiate or lead this work and its involvement was largely silent and indirect, Atlantic, which made grants totaling \$10.3 million between 2000 and 2013, contributed

TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT ILLUSTRATED BY THIS CASE

Informal alliances between individuals in philanthropy and government

Work conducted from a back-seat position, behind the scenes

Indirect influence through other philanthropies, nonprofits, and nongovernmental organizations

Emphasis on diplomacy and careful communication

Effort to change something over which government has authority (i.e., traffic safety laws) through **locally owned and championed solutions**

Work conducted at the national and provincial levels

Focused on policy change, research, public education, and infrastructure/capacity development (i.e., manufacture of tropical helmets)

At lantic served as ${\bf investor}$ (in research, evaluation, data) and ${\bf supporter}$ of other stakeholders' strategies

significantly to helping stakeholders change policies and overcome practical barriers. This case illustrates the value a philanthropy can play by investing in and supporting the existing efforts of government, other philanthropies, and nonprofit grantees.

WHY TRAFFIC SAFETY?

Motorbikes have been called "the backbone of Vietnam's economy," filling 90 percent of the transportation demand and accounting for 95 percent of all vehicles in the country. They also are objects of pride and a symbol of youth culture. But they have a significant downside, too. Traffic-related injuries and deaths are a large and growing problem in poor and middle-income countries, killing twice as many people annually as diseases like malaria. The accidents have high costs in economic as well as human terms; as a report by the Center for Global Development notes, by 2003 road accidents and the effects of resulting head injuries in Viet Nam were costing the country at least \$900 million (USD) annually—or nearly 3 percent of Viet Nam's gross domestic product. The impact on households of accident survivors could be devastating, as only 12 percent could afford the cost of treating a traumatic brain injury without borrowing money, depleting savings, and experiencing financial hardship.

Taking on the helmet issue enabled Atlantic to address a problem that had serious consequences, especially for people who were already economically vulnerable.

These costs were largely preventable by a simple solution: wearing a high-quality helmet. The risk of sustaining a serious head injury or death from a motorcycle accident drops significantly (by 70 percent and 40 percent, respectively) for helmet-wearing riders, according to a research review. Yet the majority of Vietnamese bicycle and motorbike riders did not wear helmets before passage of the 2007 law that made wearing helmets mandatory.

Working with government to address this issue fit Atlantic's priorities and practices.

It addressed the root cause of a problem that had serious consequences, especially for people who were already economically vulnerable; and it presented an opportunity to solve an urgent problem in the present to make it less likely to become even larger and more expensive in the future. Coordination with government also surfaced as a logical approach when Atlantic staff in

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Viet Nam used a process known as Haddon's matrix,²¹ to assess the problem and find opportunities for intervention, including policy change. The matrix makes clear that, for public health problems in particular, "coordination and collaboration lead to a greater understanding of how communities, local authorities, government agencies and international partners interrelate and work together."²²

HOW DID ATLANTIC ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT?

Atlantic and the Vietnamese government did not dive suddenly into a partnership or even an informal alliance to solve the problem of traffic safety. Their engagement followed extensive efforts by the government to solve the problem itself, unsuccessfully, and a period of increasing involvement by many national and international nongovernmental organizations and private funders.

The mayor of Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam's most populous city, first mandated helmet use within city limits in 1993. Local officials rescinded the order a year later, however, amid concerns that, in the absence of a national policy, it overreached local authority. Residents also complained about the cost and limited availability of helmets. Despite the setback, a leader of the cause emerged. Bui Huynh Long, who worked at the Ministry of Transport, would go on to partner on this issue with international funders and organizations.²³

Within five years, several factors converged to set the stage for progress on the helmet law and for philanthropic–government engagement. In 1997, the Vietnamese government created a National Traffic Safety Commission (NTSC), with Bui Huynh Long at the helm, to make strategic and policy recommendations, educate the public, and track governmental efforts to address traffic safety. The NTSC's birth created a point of contact and partnership for philanthropy and other sectors seeking to engage with government on this issue. ²⁴ The same year, the United States stationed its first post-war diplomat in Viet Nam. Ambassador Pete Peterson had lost a son in a traffic accident, and he cared deeply about safety issues.

Concurrently, a U.S.-born businessman named Greig Craft, who was based in Hanoi, founded the Asia Injury Prevention (AIP) Foundation to combat

Engagement between Atlantic and the Vietnamese government followed extensive efforts by the government to solve the problem itself, unsuccessfully. traffic injury and death through helmet use. In founding AIP—which Atlantic would later support, as AIP took the lead in advocating for a helmet law—Craft was responding to "the carnage I saw on the streets of Viet Nam as motorbike use skyrocketed. For me, it seemed like a war," he later told an audience. "There was incalculable human pain and suffering being inflicted on people every day."²⁵

These early champions began reaching out to engage other public, private, and philanthropic actors. In 1999, Ambassador Peterson and the embassy's health attaché for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Mike Linnan, joined with the UNICEF country representative, Morten Giersing, and the Viet Nam Ministry of Health to start the Safe Viet Nam Initiative. ²⁶ The initiative established a network linking the traffic safety efforts of government (conducted through the NTSC, Vietnamese government ministries and agencies, the U.S. and Australian embassies, CDC, USAID, and AusAID—Australia's international aid arm) and several philanthropic and nongovernmental organizations, including the AIP Foundation, UNICEF, and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Atlantic Founder Chuck Feeney saw that engaging with government on the Safe Viet Nam Initiative was an opportunity to achieve results in line with the foundation's goals.

As the number of public and private participants grew, Peterson and Linnan also reached out to Atlantic founder Chuck Feeney, who saw that engaging with government on the Safe Viet Nam Initiative was an opportunity to achieve results in line with the foundation's goals. ²⁷ Beginning in 2000, Atlantic gave grants to UNICEF Viet Nam and the AIP Foundation to support their work on traffic safety, with the stipulation that the corporate sector and other foundations match the amounts. The grants supported communications, research, and the development of strategic partnerships with government officials and agencies. For example, AIP staff cultivated relationships with leaders of local Traffic Safety Committees and Departments of Education and

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Training in Hanoi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City, building their ownership of a public information campaign and eliciting input on how to tailor the message to local needs. To further inform the campaign, AIP collaborated with Wisconsin University; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and the Centre of Communication and Design, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology to conduct qualitative research on the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of children, parents, and families that influence helmet use and enforcement.

Many of Atlantic's grants supported engagement with the local health workers, police, party officials, and educators who played a strong role in shaping and enforcing individuals' behavior in Viet Nam. ²⁸ "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," says Le Nhan Phuong, former Atlantic County Director for Viet Nam. "So a lot of the work we did involved local leadership at the provincial and district levels. When the results were desirable, they themselves were the ones to take it up to the next level and become the champions."

With that in mind, AIP and UNICEF used Atlantic funds to convene workshops with high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Transport and other agencies, media representatives, parents, teachers, doctors, police officers, and helmet manufacturers to align their understanding of the safety message and encourage them to promote helmet use. UNICEF developed and delivered training programs on child injury prevention, including the use of helmets, for the ministries of labor, health, and education and the women's, youth, and farmers' unions.

But Atlantic staff also knew that changes in policy and system capacities were needed at the national level to produce consistent, widespread improvements in traffic safety. A grant to UNICEF launched a project to prevent child injuries, including traffic-related injuries. The project involved introducing a database to track injuries and developing a national policy and national plan of action for reducing child injuries, as well as community-based interventions.

Atlantic staff deliberately remained behind the scenes to ensure that the partners most vital for passage, implementation, and enforcement of stricter public safety laws were sufficiently engaged. While Atlantic invested in research

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Advocates for a helmet law had a simple goal: to end the "incalculable human pain and suffering being inflicted on people every day."

The Atlantic Philanthropies

to help make the case for a new helmet law, a public awareness campaign, facilitation of networks linking the public and private sectors, and production of an affordable and high-quality tropical helmet, the foundation's staff encouraged government representatives to be the public champions. As Atlantic's Dr. Phuong explains:

All the work percolated from the bottom up, and people within the system championed it. We never said we would change the law—we said we would help address the issue of traffic injury. And then one day the law came into being! But it should not be a surprise, because all the work we did led up to that point. It was the intended outcome, but not directly... In public health, [we learned] never explicitly to say you will change policy. Rather, address the gaps in the system: describe the problem, engineer a solution, have communications and a networking coalition, and advocate [for the solution].

Traction for policy change was increasing around the time Atlantic joined the effort,

fueled by public interest and a growing number of public and private champions. "There was a lot of energy, enthusiasm, commitment, and leadership shown by various international groups and individuals and their Vietnamese partners working on injury prevention and helmet-related programming," researchers for the Social Science Research Council wrote in an analysis of the effort.²⁹ By the end of 2001, the government had adopted a National Policy on Accident and Injury Prevention and Control and formed a national steering committee, chaired by the ministers of health and transportation. Wearing a helmet became mandatory "for all motorcycle drivers and passengers on specific roadways, including national highways and other assigned routes."³⁰

It quickly became apparent, however, that compliance with the law was very low. In fact, the number of traffic-related deaths continued to grow, reaching an all-time high in 2002.³¹ The law was not well enforced; the fine for non-compliance was negligible; and riders complained that the available helmets were too expensive and too hot for the tropical climate.

Collaborators recognized that the helmet law wasn't going to work until more riders owned—and used—helmets. So, the AIP Foundation established the Viet Nam Helmet Wearing Coalition, a group of "interested partners

Atlantic staff encouraged government representatives to be champions for the helmet law. looking to take action." Coalition members were a mixture of governmental and philanthropic representatives, including AusAID, the Royal Danish Embassy, Intel, the FIA Foundation, the Vietnam Ministry of Transport, Viet Nam's National Traffic Safety Committee, and others. "In only three months we raised \$1.2 million dollars to fund a one-year public awareness campaign on helmet wearing," Craft noted during a presentation. "Sometimes public—private partnership such as ours can achieve results much quicker than governments alone."

The Coalition's public awareness campaign, funded by Atlantic and others, featured excuses people made for not wearing a helmet juxtaposed against high-impact images of riders who had sustained serious head injuries from motorcycle accidents. AIP, using its grant from Atlantic, also organized television news crews to follow police teams as they monitored helmet use and fined non-compliant drivers—and then gave the law breakers vouchers for free helmets as incentives to change their behavior. Within six weeks of the campaign's start, helmet-wearing rates shot up 50 percent. Craft has stated that the campaign's success also "caused the government to accelerate helmet enforcement by two years."³²

Traffic safety groups raised enough money in three months to fund a year-long public awareness campaign.

To support an appropriate (and local) engineering solution for a serious public health problem, Atlantic and other philanthropic and private partners contributed funds to create the Vietnam Safety Products and Equipment Company, which designed and began manufacturing a lightweight, well-ventilated helmet for children and adults under the Protec brand name. With support from AIP, provided by Atlantic grants and other donations, Protec then donated thousands of helmets to primary schools in the major cities.

For its part, the Vietnamese government created traffic safety committees in every province and directed the local Communist Party leaders—the people responsible for implementing national laws at the local level—to chair them. Government officials would thus be held accountable for motorcycle



Before the helmet law, only 40 percent of riders wore them. After helmets became mandatory, the number jumped to 93 percent. riders' safety, sending a strong signal that compliance with the helmet law was a priority.³³

In 2005, the United Nations adopted a General Assembly Resolution on Improving Global Road Safety, which lifted up helmet use as a key tactic for improving safety worldwide. Atlantic and other funders proposed Viet Nam as a logical first place to apply the Resolution and the AIP Foundation as a good organization to facilitate the work.³⁴ The Global Road Safety Partnership joined forces with AIP Foundation, ultimately securing \$10 million in funding from Ford Motors, General Motors, Michelin, Renault, Shell, and Toyota.³⁵ The Bloomberg Family Foundation also joined the effort.

The years of engagement around traffic safety paid off in mid-2007, when Vietnamese lawmakers unanimously approved a law proposed by Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, making it compulsory by the end of that year for all motorbike riders to wear a helmet on all roads. The law also strengthened sanctions and fines for non-compliance.

Six weeks after starting a public awareness campaign, helmet use jumped 50 percent.

WHAT HAPPENED AS A RESULT OF THE ENGAGEMENT?

Researchers from the Hanoi School of Public Health and the World Health Organization tracked the use of helmets before and after passage of the 2007 law. They observed that before December 15, 2007, when helmets became mandatory, only 40 percent of riders wore them, while by early 2011 the proportion had jumped to 93 percent.³⁶ Data analyzed by the AIP Foundation, meanwhile, suggest that the law "prevented 20,609 deaths and 412,175 serious injuries from 2008 to 2013."³⁷

An analysis by the Center for Global Development further notes that "the law gave riders an incentive to comply: a substantial fine, equaling more than 10 times previous penalties. If caught without a helmet, motorcyclists had to pay [an amount equal to] one-third of the average monthly income. This was more than the price of some helmets, making it more economical to buy a helmet than go without In the year after the new law took force, police ticketed nearly 680,000 riders for failure to comply."³⁸

TAKEAWAYS

Get to know the many different people and groups that constitute government, including their priorities, motives, and capacities. Even though Viet Nam has a single-party system, the government isn't monolithic, Dr. Phuong observes, sharing an insight that applies to almost any government engagement. "There are many different groups within government—people who are advocates, people who will block what you do, factions who want a closer relationship with [the ruling party], factions who are more international... This requires us to understand the system in a very detailed way, as well as understanding individual personalities within the system."

Data shows that the 2007 helmet law prevented 20,609 deaths and 412,175 serious injuries from 2008 to 2013.

Position philanthropy as a resource to help government achieve its goals, rather than working against government. As Atlantic's Dr. Phuong noted, Atlantic—an "outsider"—didn't arrive in Viet Nam and start telling the government "what to do." That would have resulted in the foundation being "labeled as having imperialist, colonialist ideas." Instead, he says, the foundation had to "find a local champion willing to take ownership of the issues." Dr. Phuong describes Atlantic's work in Viet Nam as "helping the government achieve its goals," and not working "against the government."

Pay attention to local culture and adapt the engagement strategy accordingly. Researchers have suggested that the helmet law worked because it used a

culturally appropriate approach: "In Viet Nam, where conformity is highly valued, it was important to orchestrate a population-wide launch where everyone could see everyone else adopting the new law. In other words, helmet-wearing became a new social norm." ³⁹

Dr. Phuong further expands on what it means for philanthropy to engage with government in a culturally appropriate way: "Because Viet Nam is a one-party state with a very strong central government, the approach we use here in working with government to change policy is quite different from what my colleagues do in South Africa, the United States, and Ireland, where a philanthropic organization can take a more antagonistic stance." Especially for problems involving public health (which require a coordinated response by government), that cultural context "requires us to work within the system and to identify individuals and groups within the system who can help us" achieve mutual goals for policy change, he says.



"In Viet Nam, where conformity is highly valued, it was important to orchestrate a population-wide launch where everyone could see everyone else adopting the new law. In other words, helmet-wearing became a new social norm."

Le Nhan Phuong, former Atlantic Country Director for Viet Nam

Concluding Thoughts

There are many ways in which philanthropy and government can engage with each other to produce policy changes that improve outcomes for vulnerable populations. Despite the variation in experiences, we can draw from them some practical knowledge that rings true whatever the issue or geography being addressed.

Context is paramount. Considering the circumstances, trends, available resources, and opportunities at hand, and then finding the overlap in priorities between philanthropy and government—rather than coming in with a preset agenda—can make all the difference between an engagement that gains traction and one that falls flat. Whether the circumstances involve political dynamics, as in Viet Nam; an opportunity to incorporate best practices while reallocating resources more effectively, as in Ireland; or trends in education-related racial disparities, as in the United States, understanding and leveraging those factors gave the engagement our examples a practical edge. Philanthropy doesn't always have to be the initiator of change; sometimes it is just an investor, and sometimes it is a vehicle to challenge, lift up, or open new doors. But in all cases, as an interviewee said, "If we don't do the homework to understand the context, we won't know which role to play."

Philanthropy doesn't always have to be the initiator of change; sometimes it is just an investor, and sometimes it is a vehicle to challenge, lift up, or open new doors.

Successful engagements often begin not with an offer of money but with a quiet phase of building relationships and paying attention to competing concerns, priorities, and constraints by gathering and examining data, asking questions, listening to knowledgeable people (including smart outsiders as well as

designated experts), commissioning "think pieces," and trying to understand what government needed to move on an issue. Christopher Oechsli, president and CEO of Atlantic, listed this practice as one of the foundation's most valuable lessons during an interview with *Generosity Magazine* in 2015: "Begin with work on things you know, care about, and can learn about. Be a student. Observe and listen before you act."

Achieving a policy win is only the first step. Monitoring and enforcing the change, and sometimes re-engaging to fix glitches, are equally important whether the goal is better traffic safety, school discipline, or children's services. As researchers of Viet Nam's helmet law noted, "The initial change will always be imperfect. There will always be the need to sustain and fine-tune policies and behaviors after the initial change takes hold. It is important to plan for this from the outset and not attempt more than is doable." And what is "doable" will, of course, depend on context.

Strategic framing of the issue, supported by solid data and evidence, facilitates engagement between government and philanthropy. As this report shows, engagement between philanthropy and government gained momentum and attracted public support after Atlantic and its grantees reframed public debate about the problem and its solutions. In the United States, for example, shifting the school discipline frame from a safety perspective to one emphasizing racial equity and common-sense educational practices garnered support from government and the public, while in Viet Nam reframing helmet-wearing as a matter of traffic safety attracted broader support from the people who had to comply with and enforce the policy change. What made the new frames possible was the solid data and research findings that Atlantic and other philanthropies funded and disseminated and the strategic effort to ensure that the themes were repeated across different constituencies and types of work. This knowledge and evidence, and the communications strategies used to publicize them, created a compelling rationale and demand for policy change as people from multiple constituencies were saying the same thing, in their own particular way; the aggregation of that messaging and action begins to shift the public narrative.

Reframing an issue — for instance, shifting the school discipline debate from one about safety to achieving racial equity—can lead to more effective engagements between philanthropy and government.

Build on successful efforts already underway, when complementary efforts already exist, rather than reinvent the wheel. Atlantic used its resources and influence to accelerate and amplify the collective efforts of other private, nonprofit, and public-sector actors. Each participant played its own role, but the combined effort added up to a more powerful strategy, greater momentum for change, and better alignment.

The final takeaway: It is eminently possible for philanthropy to engage with government in ways that advance both parties' objectives and produce real gains for the people that both serve. The question is not *whether* to engage but *how*—and it's a question we hope this report has begun to answer.

When it comes to philanthropy and government engaging with each other, it shouldn't be *whether* to, but *how* to.

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Appendix

For additional reading on the topic of government partnerships and engagement, the following reports and case studies are available on The Atlantic Philanthropies website: www.atlanticphilanthropies.org



Philanthropy Working with Government: A Case Study of The Atlantic Philanthropies' Partnership with the Irish Government

This study examined the extent to which The Atlantic Philanthropies' approach of working with government to influence policy and practice, with a particular focus on public service reform, can be considered innovative and successful. The study focused on the period from 2003 to 2014. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/case-studies/philanthropy-working-with-government-a-case-study



Partnership With Government: An Exit Strategy for Philanthropies?

Co-authors Colin Knox and Padraic Quirk share a case study of Atlantic's work in Northern Ireland, where it supported three thematic intervention areas: aging; children and young people; and reconciliation and human rights. Part of Atlantic's exit strategy has involved a formal partnership with the Northern Ireland Assembly to take external interventions to scale and mainstream services previously funded through NGOs. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/case-studies/partnership-with-government-an-exit-strategy-for-philanthropies



Advocacy, Politics, & Philanthropy: A Reflection on a Decade of Immigration Reform Advocacy, 2004–2014

This Innovation Network report examines the impact and shares lessons from Atlantic's \$70.3 million effort between 2004 and 2014 to reform the U.S. immigration system. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/research-reports/advocacy-politics-philanthropy-a-reflection-on-a-decade-of-immigration-reform-advocacy



Evaluation of The Atlantic Philanthropies Migration Programme

This Rand Europe report presents findings about the impacts that Atlantic's Migration Programme achieved in law, policy, and practice in the Republic of Ireland, and the lessons that might be drawn for other grantmakers and grantees, as well as policymakers, researchers, and academics working in this field. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/evaluations/evaluation-of-the-atlantic-philanthropies-migration-programme



Atlantic's Children & Youth Programme in Ireland and Northern Ireland is Catalyst for Change

This Mathematica Policy Research report contains findings from an evaluation of The Atlantic Philanthropies' Children & Youth Programme in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, which was designed to encourage government investment in evidence-based prevention and early intervention programmes. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/evaluations/children-youth-programme-ireland-and-northern-ireland-overview-programme-evaluation-finding



Northern Ireland (United Kingdom): Implementing Joined-up Governance for a Common Purpose

This assessment conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) of Northern Ireland's public reform agenda credits the Atlantic Philanthropies with helping the government in its ongoing efforts to transform and reform its public services to better meet the needs of its citizens. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/research-reports/northern-ireland-united-kingdom-implementing-joined-up-governance-for-a-common-purpose



How a Small Advocacy Organisation Advanced Big Reforms: The Irish Penal Reform Trust

This case study describes how the Irish Penal Reform Trust, a small organization with limited resources, successfully implemented an advocacy strategy that led the Irish government to take steps to improve conditions and reduce overcrowding in the country's prisons. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/case-studies/how-a-small-advocacy-organization-advanced-big-reforms-the-irish-penal-reform-trust



First, Treat the System: The Atlantic Philanthropies' Effort to Promote Health and Equity in Viet Nam

This report charts Atlantic's more than \$250 million of investments to help Viet Nam create a more equitable primary care health care system and instill a culture of public health. www.atlanticphilanthropies-effort-promote-health-and-equity-viet-nam-inves



Tilling The Field: Lessons About Philanthropy's Role in School Discipline Reform

This report describes a four-year, \$47 million school discipline reform initiative that Atlantic launched in 2010 to promote policies and practices that would keep vulnerable children in school and on track to graduate and go on to college, rather than on the path to prison. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/research-reports/tilling-the-field



Ten Years On: Confirming Impacts from Research Investment

This case study focuses on the direct commercial and economic impacts from government investment into centres and initiatives supported by the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI) 2000-2006, a program to stimulate the development of research performance in universities across the Republic of Ireland that Atlantic co-funded. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/case-studies/ten-years-on-confirming-impacts-from-research-investment



Paying Dividends: A Report on The Atlantic Philanthropies Investment in Dementia in Ireland

This study examines Atlantic's investments in the Republic of Ireland to improve dementia care, boost research, and encourage changes in policy, and how these efforts have impacted the lives of people with dementia and their families. www.atlanticphilanthropies-investment-in-dementia-in-ireland



Evaluation of The Atlantic Philanthropies' School Discipline Reform Portfolio

This report summarizes findings from a two-year evaluation of The Atlantic Philanthropies' school discipline reform portfolio. The portfolio, which ran from late 2009 to 2016 and invested over \$47 million dollars in 57 grants to 38 different grantees, was created to improve educational outcomes for students by reducing the number of zero-tolerance suspensions, expulsions, and arrests in schools, particularly for children of color, and enhancing the use of positive disciplinary practices that keep children in school and engaged in learning. Atlantic set a nationwide goal to reduce school suspensions by one half and reduce discipline disparities by one quarter. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/evaluations/ the-atlantic-philanthropies-school-discipline-reform-portfolio



Ten Years of Learning

This report documents learning from Atlantic's Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative—a 10-year, \$200-million effort, some of which was done in partnership with government, to make programs available across the island of Ireland that were shown to be effective at providing the support children and young people need to be healthy and do well in school and to help ensure that they have bright futures. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/research-reports/ report-ten-years-learning



Investment in Knowledge

This case study describes the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions, an effort co-funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Irish Government aimed at strengthening the capacity of Irish universities to undertake basic research of international quality. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/case-studies/investment-knowledge



Helmet Day! Lessons Learned on Vietnam's Road to Healthy Behavior

This report, produced by the Social Science Research Council, covers the history and lessons from an eight-year effort that resulted in a national law mandating helmet use by motorcycle riders in Viet Nam. Results showed decreases in serious head injuries and road traffic deaths. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/evaluation-helmet-day-lessons-learned-vietnams-road-healthy-behavior



Making a Difference: Capturing the Learning from The Atlantic Philanthropies Human Rights Programme in Ireland

This report focuses on grantmaking in the Republic of Ireland under what was originally called the Reconciliation and Human Rights programme. As part of this programme, Atlantic invested in building the core capacity and infrastructure of human rights. Atlantic also selected populations with which it believed it could make a difference and leave a lasting legacy after it was gone. The purpose of the report is to extract lessons from the core cluster of grants that could be useful to activists and funders. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/ research-reports/making-a-difference-capturing-the-learning-from-the-atlantic-philanthropies-human-rights-program-in-ireland



What Ambitious Donors Can Learn from The Atlantic Philanthropies' Experience Making Big Bets

This report analyzes 25 of Atlantic's "big bet" grants — those over \$10 million or more to a single organization or focused initiative — and highlights impact and lessons. Among the "big bets" analyzed is The Program for Research in Third-Level Institutions, an effort that Atlantic co-funded with the Irish government to transform Ireland from a place where the biggest export had been its own people into a leader in Europe's modern knowledge economy. www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/research-reports/ what-ambitious-donors-can-learn-from-the-atlantic-philanthropies-experience-making-big-bets

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