

# A Solid Foundation Designing Advocacy Communication Support Systems



Ed Walz, Partner ● Grantmakers In Health ● Nov. 2017



About me

# The New York Times

The Opinion Pages | EDITORIAL

## Children's Health Insurance at a Crossroads

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD SEPT. 21, 2014

Federal financing for a beneficial health insurance program for low-income children, known as the Children's Health Insurance Program or CHIP, will run out next year unless Congress agrees to extend it. Bills are pending in both the House and the Senate to extend financing for four years, to 2019. Congress should approve the extension in the lame-duck session after the midterm elections so that families and state officials will know what the future holds. The program needs to be maintained amid uncertainty as to whether other good coverage will be available for these children.

CHIP was introduced in 1997 to provide insurance for low-income children whose families earned too much to qualify for Medicaid and too little to afford private health insurance. It has since grown to cover some eight million children at an annual cost of \$13 billion, with the federal government paying most of the bill. Because states determine eligibility, coverage varies greatly from state to state. But over all, CHIP has helped cut the uninsured rate for children in half, from 14 percent in 1997 to 7 percent last year.

The issue of whether to fully finance the program along present lines has arisen because the Affordable Care Act has provided new options that will allow lower-income families with children to obtain subsidized private insurance or, in some states, qualify for Medicaid. This does not mean that CHIP can be eliminated entirely; many children will have no other affordable option. Rather, the discussion is whether to reduce costs by narrowing eligibility and shrinking benefits, or to extend funding for two to four more years. That longer extension makes sense because it would give the administration and Congress a chance to see how children are faring over the next several years with different forms of coverage before deciding on any drastic changes in CHIP

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Spring 2017



## The Strategy Behind the Design of Advocacy Communications Support

Lessons for Foundation Program Officers from  
The Atlantic Philanthropies' advocacy grantmaking

By Meghann Flynn Beer and Ed Walz

- Elev8
- School discipline
- Immigration reform
- KidsWell



**Center for  
Evaluation Innovation**

1. How was support structured?
2. What were participants' takeaways?
3. What lessons could we draw?



# A constellation of options

- Consultant
- Research-informed messages
- Template materials
- Ongoing technical assistance
- Training
- Funds earmarked for communication



## Communication from the start

Atlantic failed to convey to state grantees upfront that delivering a unified message across state lines was critical to the strategy ... [so] ... some windows of political opportunity were missed, the advocacy work proceeded at a slower pace than it might have, and the effort didn't benefit ... from a national message.



## 5 before project launch

**1**

Strategic objectives

**2**

Prospective grantees

**3**

Communication assessment

**4**

Design support system

**5**

Communicate expectations



# Define your strategic objectives

**1**

Strategic objectives

**2**

Prospective grantees

**3**

Communication assessment

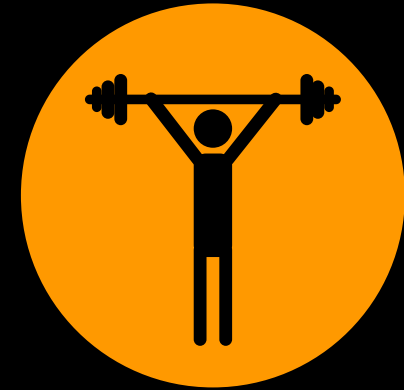
**4**

Design support system

**5**

Communicate expectations

# About policy change or capacity building?



Policy wins:

End

Means

Support role:

Do

Help

Measure:

Policy

Capacity

Grantee flexibility:

Less

More



# Identify prospective grantees

1

Strategic objectives

2

Prospective grantees



Insuring America's  
**Children**

STATES LEADING THE WAY

# Assess their advocacy communication

1

Strategic objectives

2

Prospective grantees

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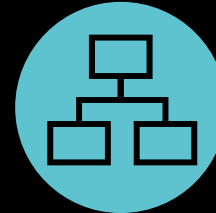


# Advocacy underlined

## Advocacy Communications Capacity

There are several effective tools available to funders who want to assess the communications capacity of prospective grantees. But advocacy communications capacity—the degree to which an organization uses communications effectively to advance its advocacy work—is different. While a complete exploration of this multidimensional topic is beyond the scope of this brief, consider these questions to begin an advocacy-specific communications capacity conversation with prospective grantees:

- 1 When you plan an advocacy initiative, are your communications team members and/or outside communications experts active participants in the planning process?
- 2 Does each advocacy objective in your strategy have corresponding communications objectives?
- 3 How does the timing and focus of your communications work complement or amplify your other advocacy tactics?
- 4 Does your advocacy landscape scan consider communications opportunities and threats?
- 5 Does your communications team shape the development of fact sheets, reports, testimony, and other direct advocacy tools—as well press releases and social media posts?
- 6 Do your communications experts conduct message training for spokespersons preparing for legislative testimony, as well as media interviews?
- 7 Have you cultivated productive working relationships with journalists who cover your issue(s)?
- 8 Are organizational executives committed to communications as essential to effective advocacy?
- 9 Do you know which media outlets are influential to key policymakers, and do you target those outlets?
- 10 Did your grant proposal include a robust narrative about the contributions communications would make to your advocacy success, as well as a corresponding communications budget?



Reporting



Planning



Scope



Expertise



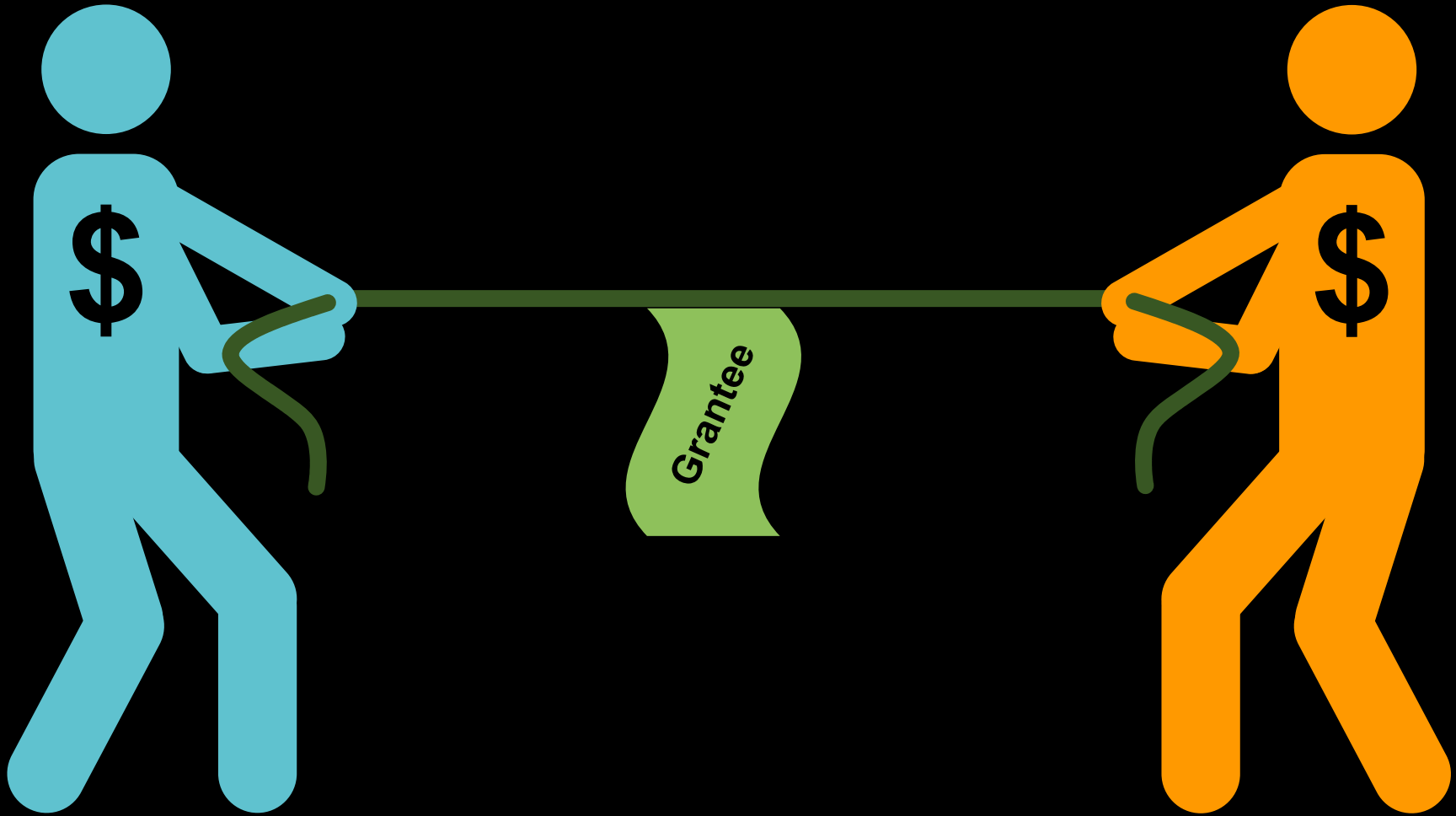
Proposal

# 🌀 What's their capacity – 2 extremes

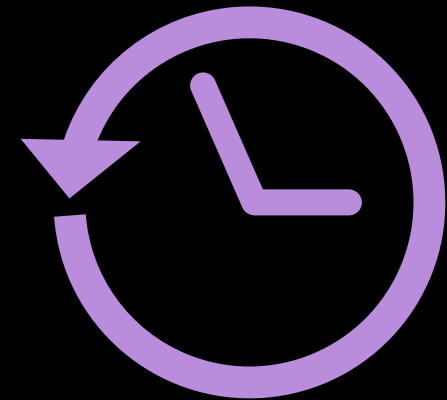




# Conflicting obligations



# Conflicting obligations



# Reevaluate prospective grantees

1

Strategic objectives

2

Prospective grantees

3

Communication assessment

4

Design support system

5

Communicate expectations





# Design communication support system

1

Strategic objectives

2

Prospective grantees

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Communication assessment

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Design support system

5

Communicate expectations

# To hub or not to hub



Message consistency



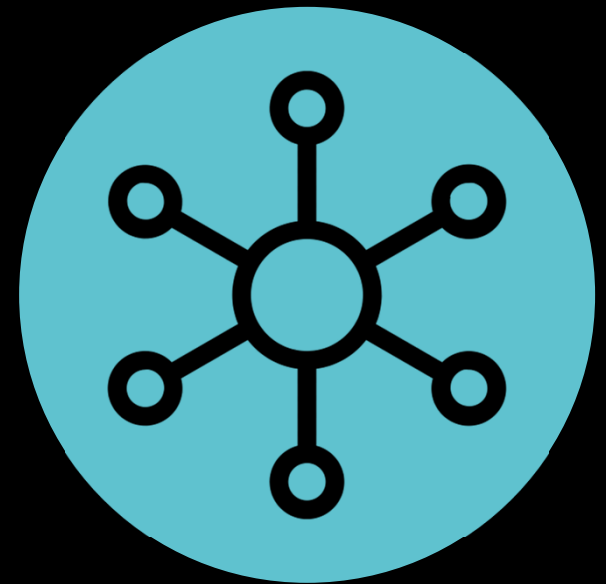
Monitoring & reporting



Scale



Partnership culture



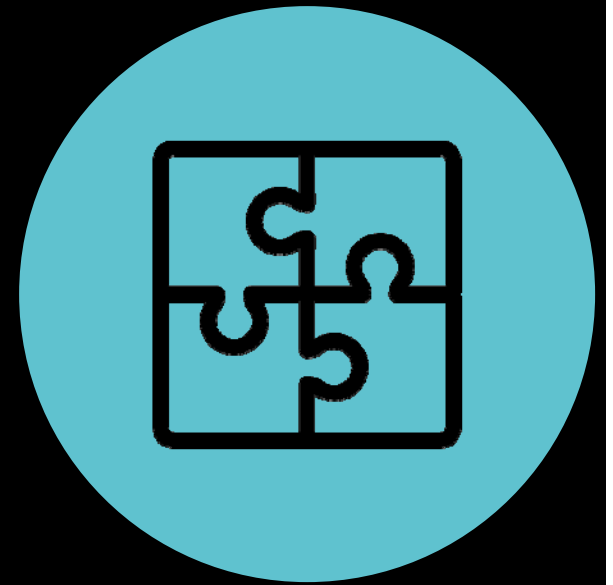
# How does the hub fit in?



Peer or new voice?

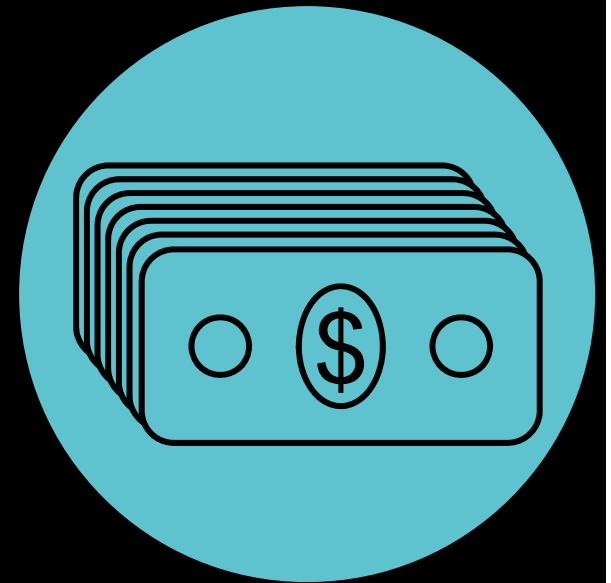


Rulemaker or facilitator?



## Funding – flexibility or focus

Communications is important, but we're a policy shop at heart. If I get the budget for another salary, I'm going to hire an analyst. Then I can beg, borrow, and steal to cover communications.





# Communicate expectations

- 1** Strategic objectives
- 2** Prospective grantees
- 3** Communication assessment
- 4** Design support system
- 5** Communicate expectations

## Finish these sentences

1. This initiative is about ...
2. The role of communications in our strategy is ...
3. We expect our communications support team to ...
4. When working with the support team, we expect grantees to ...
5. We will integrate communications into performance assessments by ...

# Time to launch



# Questions?





## Finish these sentences

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# Communications needs the MEL love too



Consistent monitoring



Look for opportunities



Ask both support team & grantees



Consider a contingency fund

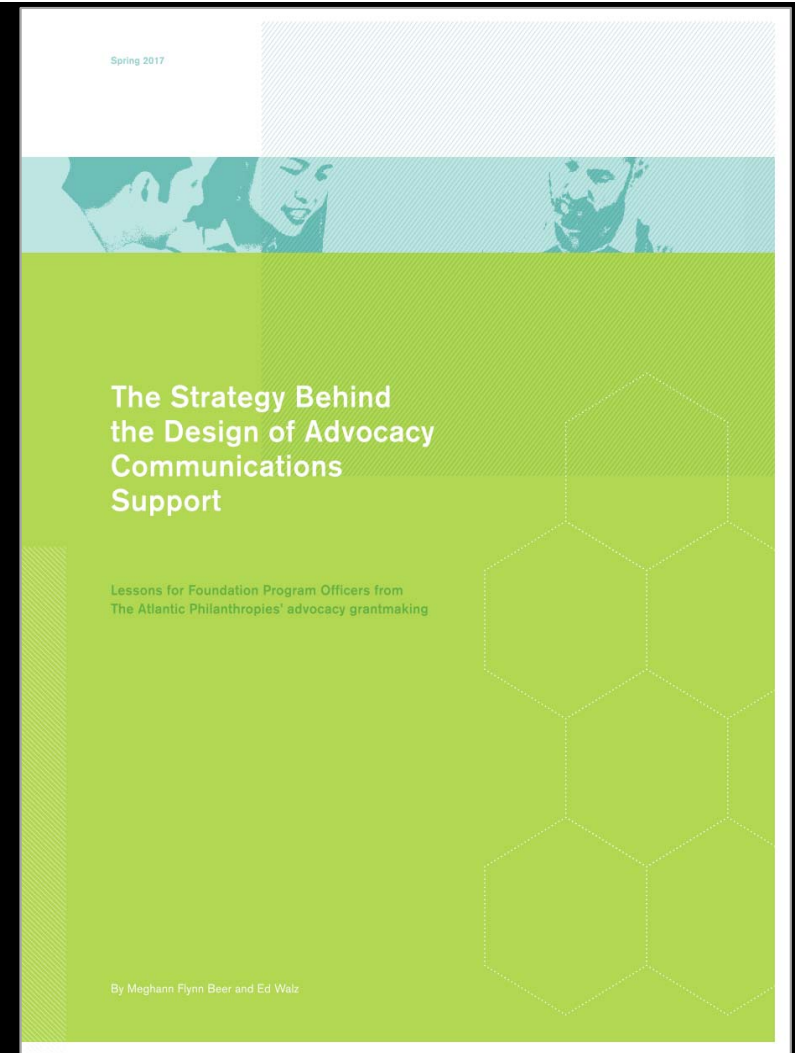


 Thanks to ...



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*The*  
**ATLANTIC**  
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[http://www.evaluationinnovation.org/publications/  
strategy-behind-design-advocacy-communications-support](http://www.evaluationinnovation.org/publications/strategy-behind-design-advocacy-communications-support)

 Also check out ...



<http://atlaslearning.org>



# Thank you!

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## **Content Slide – Default**

- Bullet 1
- Bullet 2
- Bullet 3