

GEOGRAPHIC BARRIERS
Program Year 2010

GOAL: “To reduce geographic barriers to accessing health and health care for the people of New Hampshire”

New Hampshire’s geography is the foundation on which our communities were built and the scenic backdrop against which we live our lives. Our rivers, mountain ranges, lakes, and agricultural lands defined our economy and still create boundaries for our lives today. Those same boundaries can become barriers between our residents and the activities and services that improve their health. Many of us must rely on public transportation or family and friends to get us to and from food shopping, work, family gatherings and community events. Access to oral, mental, primary and specialty health care can be a significant challenge, whether it’s a few blocks or several hours away. The Endowment has approached the issue of geographic barriers by focusing on both ends of the problem – seeking better ways of moving the people to services and seeking better ways of getting the services to where people can access them.



Investment to date: \$4,780,482
Number of grants to date: 76

Theme Outcomes

- A comprehensive and sustainable body of science- and evidence-based knowledge about geographic barriers in New Hampshire, New England, and in the United States
- A health system in New Hampshire in which geography is not a limiting factor in health or access to health care
- Strengthened State and local policies that reduce the impact of geographic barriers to health and access to health care in New Hampshire

Theme Strategies

- Supporting the development and dissemination of data/information/best practices about geographic barriers in New Hampshire and in the United States
- Supporting communication, education, and advocacy efforts to increase awareness of and action on issues of geographic access
- Developing and implementing new models, such as in transportation and telehealth, to reduce the impact of geographic barriers on health and access to health care
- Fostering collaboration among key transportation and health stakeholders to increase cost-effective geographic access
- Supporting efforts to create State and local policies that will reduce the impact of geographic barriers on health and access to health care
- Building relationships that inform and strengthen national and local strategies and leverage knowledge and resources to reduce the impact of geographic barriers on health and access to health care

Overall Progress

Two key areas have emerged in our Geographic Barriers to Health theme: transportation to services and activities that support telehealth and technology strategies to connect people and health care.

Transportation: The Endowment has supported projects that:

- Plan and pilot approaches to address the spectrum of transportation needs in rural, urban, and suburban areas, including demonstration projects to develop community-based transportation brokerages.
- Collect information about need, convene stakeholders, and develop coordinated plans to address transportation barriers in areas such as Sullivan County, Strafford County, the Derry-Salem area, Carroll County, the North Country, the Souhegan Valley, and the eastern Monadnock region.
- Bring experts on community-based brokerages to New Hampshire and conduct applied research in the field, including a study on demand and perceived need for public transportation.
- Plan for expansion of efforts to develop private transportation systems such as Bonnie CLAC, which helps lower income individuals purchase reliable, efficient cars; and increasing rideshare opportunities for health care employees.
- Develop organizational advocacy capacity on community transportation and transportation coordination.

Telehealth: The Endowment's work in the telehealth area is newer and has focused on:

- Funding demonstration projects and associated research that explores the potential of telehealth and technology to reduce costs and improve the quality of and access to health services. New Hampshire mental health and home care agencies have embraced the use of home monitoring and video-conferencing technology and are currently piloting a number of initiatives across the state.
- Convening to enhance knowledge across the health sector and to explore opportunities for multi-disciplinary collaboration.
- Planning and data collection to assess the readiness of providers and the public to adopt technological solutions to the state's geographic barriers to access including a best-practice white paper, a comprehensive needs assessment, and exploration into the creation of a statewide telehealth program.
- Leveraging resources to enhance the telecommunication infrastructure in the state and to purchase equipment.

Current Funding Interests

Transportation: The Endowment is interested in:

- Ongoing model development and planning for regional community-based brokerages in communities where we are already working. We will only support proposals from new communities and regions if there is a clear lack of community infrastructure that will be needed to participate in the statewide coordinated community transportation effort.
- Requests for convening, technical assistance, applied research and policy grants that support efforts to address state policy issues related to the development, sustainable funding, and management of transportation brokerage systems.
- Projects that will demonstrate how to blend our vital volunteer transportation services with more formal systems and the transportation coordination model.

Telehealth: The telehealth area of the theme is at an earlier phase in its development. The Endowment is interested in:

- Demonstration projects and dissemination of best practices. Because equipment, hardware, and information-technology infrastructure can be costly for some telehealth initiatives, the Endowment encourages applicants to pursue a mix of funding partners for these capital costs.
- Leveraged opportunities created through receipt of a Rural Health Pilot Program Grant, which will build a broadband telehealth network linking health facilities in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.
- Policy efforts that will promote telecommunications infrastructure improvements and reduce reimbursement and licensure barriers.

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