

# About US



## Supporting Strategic Philanthropy

Mathematica helps foundations plan, implement, and learn from their philanthropic programs and initiatives. Consistent with the goals of many foundations, Mathematica's mission is to improve public well-being by bringing the highest standards of quality, objectivity, and excellence to bear on the provision of information collection and analysis to our clients. During the past 30 years, established and newer foundations alike have partnered with Mathematica to benefit from our combination of subject matter and methods expertise, appreciation for evidence, strong process-facilitation skills, and audience-focused communications.

We have supported or evaluated some of the philanthropic sector's signature endeavors in the United States and internationally, including those in early childhood; education; career training and workforce development; health care access, quality, and utilization; maternal and child health; public and population health; leadership and human capital development; community- and systems-change; and juvenile justice.

### **Subject matter and policy expertise**

Our staff are experts in a wide range of U.S. and international topics. We have deep knowledge of programs and policies meant to benefit vulnerable populations. Every project team, and the clients they serve, benefit from access to Mathematica's full range of expertise.

## PLANNING

**Support for strategic planning.** Mathematica supports strategic decision making for foundations about their program areas and how their work in those program areas will generate societal value and impact. We offer a variety of services to help foundation leaders and staff explore and develop new program areas, strategies, and grant initiatives. To ensure that planning processes are informed with the best and most current thought leadership, we identify, recruit, and convene technical expert or advisory panels; we also conduct environmental scans, including expert interviews and literature reviews and syntheses.

We engage foundations and stakeholders through exercises in critical thinking to develop theories of change and other conceptual frameworks to reach a realistic understanding of how resources, external factors, and types of interventions contribute to long-term change. We help foundations base decisions on diverse viewpoints and shared goals by engaging communities and stakeholders in planning discussions. We provide these services a la carte or as part of developing a comprehensive or refreshed strategic plan.

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### Process facilitation

The right processes, skillfully executed, underlie strategic philanthropy. Mathematica brings skills in facilitation, collaboration, project management, and design to its foundation assignments. When we work internationally we couple these skills with in-country experience and language proficiency.



*Project example:* To support strategic planning by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, we conducted an environmental scan of the evidence base and interventions relevant to the impact of young children’s health on school readiness and educational outcomes. Click to view project details.

**Developing plans for monitoring, evaluation, and learning.** Planning a sound approach to monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) involves developing a comprehensive monitoring strategy, selectively evaluating program activities, and planning for

continuous learning to improve programs. Through a collaborative process, Mathematica excels at helping foundations articulate learning objectives and then designing approaches to meet those objectives, whether they aim to measure impact, qualitatively assess progress, develop evaluative capacity in grantees, or promote accountability. Our approach ensures that indicators and measures, data sources, and analysis methods are all in service to overall learning objectives, even when many grantees are pursuing program objectives through different means or in different contexts.

*Project example:* For the Rockefeller Foundation’s Transforming Health Systems Initiative, we developed and implemented a system to monitor global, regional, and country-level activities in four work streams—policy and advocacy, health financing, stewardship of mixed health systems, and health information systems. Click to view project details.

### Breadth of methods

With a well-stocked tool box, we can recommend and help foundations use the right tools for the job at hand. A few of the methods used in recent foundation projects include:

- Using web-based technology to collect survey data from hard-to-reach populations
- Conducting rapid-cycle evaluation to identify causal relationships between an operational change and a desired outcome, using administrative data
- Conducting case studies to understand how changes in health care policy affect children in low-income families

## IMPLEMENTING

**Providing technical assistance.** Foundations increasingly launch technical assistance initiatives or help grantees access information, acquire knowledge, and develop the skills they need to achieve outcomes and goals. Mathematica provides technical assistance in several formats, such as facilitation of learning collaboratives; one-to-one decision support or consultation; trainings; help desk operation; online workspaces; and toolkits, how-to guides, and handbooks.



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### **Appreciation for evidence**

The appreciation for evidence that imbues all our work enables clients to make judicious, timely decisions.

In traditional and rapid-cycle evaluations, we generate evidence using the most appropriate data collection and analysis methods. In technical assistance projects, we assess the available evidence and convey strengths and limitations to clients.



***Project example:*** The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation selected Mathematica and the Community College Research Center (CCRC) to provide technical assistance for evaluation and measurement to more than 30 grantees in the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program. [Click to view project details.](#)

**Establishing grant programs.** Foundations also look to Mathematica as an operational partner. We leverage our subject matter and methods expertise, our diverse professional networks, and our organizational and project management skills to help foundations develop and implement grant programs and initiatives. After initial planning, we identify, recruit, and convene technical advisory committees to refine program parameters and help foundations identify potential grantee partners. We draft calls for proposals to reflect a foundation's vision and stakeholder input; field queries from applicants; and design, manage, and participate in proposal review and selection. We also help foundations design effective and efficient grantee reporting systems.

***Project example:*** Mathematica is the national program office for a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) grant program, Evaluating High-Value Innovations from Low-Resource Communities. As the national program office, we assembled a technical advisory committee, supported the development of a call for proposals, organized a two-stage application and review process, and facilitated the foundation's selection of proposals likely to generate knowledge about high-value health innovations. Mathematica will monitor grantees' progress to synthesize program results and lessons. [Click to view project details.](#)

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### **Audience-focused communication**

We choose from a range of communications tactics to deliver technical assistance, convey findings and recommendations, and facilitate collaboration:

- Fact sheets, briefs, and other documents
- Electronic mailings and newsletters
- Multimedia, including videos and podcasts
- Infographics and data visualization
- Interactive forums and webinars

We also offer website planning and development services, providing foundations with options that range from simple informational websites to dynamic portals and user communities.

**Research center operations.** Foundations that seek to expand the knowledge base or inform sound policy decisions in a major interest area over many years can partner with Mathematica for high-quality, timely, and objective research and analysis.

*Project example:* The nonpartisan Center for Studying Health System Change (HSC), a Mathematica subsidiary from 1995 to 2013, conducted policy research and analysis that helped decision makers understand the national and local market forces driving changes in the U.S. health system. RWJF founded HSC and was its sole funder until 2003, when other foundations, government agencies, and private organizations also began to support the organization. Click to view project details.

## **LEARNING**

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**Support for reflection and improvement.** Foundations that strive to alleviate complex social problems must learn and adapt continually. Mathematica supports the planning, implementing, and learning cycles. We examine questions about implementation, resources, context, systems, settings, populations, and outcomes and help foundations refine assumptions and improve efforts when new information and opportunities emerge. We do not equate reporting results with learning; thus, we gear written products and facilitated discussion toward timely, actionable insights among targeted audiences, from foundation leaders to community stakeholders.

*Project example:* For The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, we produced a series of publicly available issue briefs and other learning products on the implementation successes and challenges faced by grantees. We also regularly participated in grantee meetings hosted by the foundation to foster peer learning. Click to view project details.

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