Narrative

Explanation of how Community Commons is intended to work; outline of plans for a fully developed product and information regarding co-design:

Community Commons is an interactive mapping, networking, and learning utility for leaders from community to national levels, working to create healthy, equitable, and sustainable communities. It is designed to connect, enhance the performance, and track the long-term impact of place-based, multi-sector initiatives (and their array of leaders, partners, funders, advisors and evaluators) working toward the inter-related goals of improved population health, equitable prosperity, the vitality of place, and meaningful engagement in our democracy.

Community Commons’ three primary goals are to: (1) Build the learning, efficacy and collective impact of place-based initiatives/field building; (2) Connect and galvanize the communities’ movement and leaders as a distributed, transpartisan, boundary-crossing, co-benefit constituency for healthy public policy, and wise public and private investments; and (3) Increase health equity and reduce the burden of disease and socio-economic challenges, while enhancing meaningful civic engagement in our democracy.

Co-Design: Community Commons is rooted in the values, theory of action, and commitment of Advancing the Movement (ATM), a diverse alliance of 50+ organizations and hundreds of leaders from across multiple stakeholder groups, which inspired the creation of and provides governance for Community Commons. In partnership with ATM, the Institute for People, Place and Possibility (IP3) responded to the challenge presented by ATM by providing significant pro bono support, raising new funds and co-designing, building, and hosting Community Commons. IP3, a Missouri-based not-for-profit social venture, is a consortium of three organizations: The Center for Applied Research and Environmental Systems at the University of Missouri, Community Initiatives, and Transtria.

Plans for further developing the product: In just 18 months, The Commons evolved from a vision -- with widespread stakeholder engagement and very little money -- to delivery of concept on a live interactive platform. The Commons has already garnered active participation from thousands of influential leaders, organizations, agencies and initiatives around the nation. With the next stage of investment in build-out, scaling-for-impact, sustainability planning and evaluation, The Commons is poised to realize its promise to the nation. The Commons will increasingly engage leaders and organizations across sectors, fields and perspectives, in social capital-building conversations of possibility and action on issues of significance, while providing access to best-of-class resources (e.g., SDOH data, GIS mapping, impact stories, model policies/practices, apps and forums.)

www.communitycommons.org
The key features of Community Commons as they relate to the challenge:

*The Commons* is an integrated social technology, that applies a continually-evolving ‘prosumer’ developmental model, providing easy-to-use, free-to-end-user, democratized access to social determinants of health data, and robust array of resources on a web-based platform that supports -- and can track -- collective impact for the health of people and places. Features include:

- **An interactive Initiatives Map of the Movement**, featuring searchable site profiles and stories of hundreds of place-based, evidence-informed community initiatives around the nation. The interactive, searchable map of the broad-based ‘healthy communities movement’, already featuring over 3,000 place-based, evidence-informed initiatives. To date, more than 500 have completed profiles. Additional ‘qualifying’ sites that meet quality criteria are being added regularly, consistent with a staged approach to engaging multi-issue/cross-field/co-benefit partners.

- A **Commons Map Room**, where users can make GIS maps and generate reports by accessing over 7,000 GIS data layers at multiple levels of geography including state, county, zip code, tract, block group, block, and point-levels. This is the most current, comprehensive, and trusted single-source of such data in the nation. It covers a broad spectrum of the social determinants of health and drivers of equitable prosperity. The data engine is constantly updated, and new data sets are regularly added.

- An initial array of ‘Starter Maps’, tools, widgets, data apps, case stories, and other contextualized resources. With Starter Maps, for example, ‘lay users’ can – with a couple of clicks - make and share sophisticated GIS maps of food deserts in their locales.

- Access to *who and what’s working* across the array of place-based initiatives in the nation by accessing news feeds, compelling videos, hot-off-the press features of communities and leaders having an impact, tutorials, and other useful resources are added on an ongoing basis.

- Engaging *dialogue with colleagues around the nation* exploring similar interests and challenges. Leading practitioners and luminaries will periodically serve as guest hosts and curators in the “interactive commons.”
The data sets and tools used to build this application:

Datasets: Community Commons utilizes an Internet based GIS developed and implemented by the Center for Applied Research and Environmental Systems (CARES) at the University of Missouri. This National GIS Engine makes public data publicly accessible - at no cost - for all communities in the United States as easy-to-understand data visualizations. This public good utility requires ongoing monitoring and regular updating of existing datasets, as well as identifying and incorporating additional datasets.

Open access to over 7,000 National Source Data GIS Layers, which include socio-economic and demographic (Census/American Community Survey), health, education, political, and environmental data, serve as a distinctive foundation for addressing a myriad of research, advocacy, and public policy issues. These National Source layers are datasets that are available across the United States at varying levels of aggregation (i.e., data at the state, congressional/legislative district, county, zip code, tract, block group, group, or point level).

7,000 National Source Data GIS Layers organized by “Community Indicator” themes. Users select GIS layers from these themes to generate interactive maps at the local, state or national level (image clipped from Community Commons Map Room)

Tools used to build Community Commons include:

Software:
- Windows Server
- Microsoft SQL Server
- MySQL Database Server
- WordPress
- BuddyPress
- ESRI’s ArcIMS Server
- Open Source GDAL data converter
- Visual Studio 2010

Programming languages and techniques:
- ASP.NET
- JavaScript, HTML, CSS
- PHP
- Google Map API
- Google Geocoding Service
- MarkerClusterer library for Google Maps v3
- Ajax

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Evaluation Criteria

**A description of how Community Commons addresses the evaluation criteria:**

- **Easy Access** – Community Commons provides stakeholders with easy access to a comprehensive suite of information resources to maximize their success in achieving the objectives of their choice using Key Features including: The *interactive Initiatives Map of the nation*, the *Commons Map Room* (GIS), Starter Maps, tools, widgets, data apps, case stories, news feeds, compelling videos, hot-off-the-press features of communities and leaders having an impact, tutorials, and other useful resources that are added on an ongoing basis.

- **Platform Neutrality** – Community Commons is platform neutral and can be accessed by a simple web browser. Community Commons is a public good utility (no cost to use Community Commons).

- **User Appeal** – The Commons engages users, including those who may be on the front lines of prevention but are not web savvy.

- **Innovation of Design** – Community Commons is original, creative, and empowering.

- **Broad applicability** – Community Commons has broad applicability and potential for expansion and reuse given the value-add of its key features including a robust national GIS engine that can be used in any community in the country.

- **Integration of Health Data** – Community Commons has over 7,000 National Source Data GIS layers including hundreds of data sets acquired from HHS (e.g., CDC, Community Health Data Initiative, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Provider of Service (POS), HRSA Bureau of Health Professions).

- **Evidence of Co-design and Collaboration** – Community Commons has been thoughtfully designed with public health or health care subject matter experts. Specifically, the Advancing the Movement (ATM) initiators including the following Funders and Health Systems: HHS, CDC, Convergence Partners: Kaiser Permanente, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, California Endowment, Nemours, Kresge.

Transtria is the evaluator for *The Commons*. Transtria has developed the Community Commons Evaluation Framework (CCEF) to increase understanding of the impact of the system design, architecture, format, content, and processes on use of the connections, tools, resources, and information to advance national, state, and local initiatives to create healthy, livable, and sustainable communities. Goals are to:

1) Track the various inputs to *The Commons* and their effects on system functionality;

2) Assess the impact of curation activities on use of *The Commons*;

3) Evaluate how use of *The Commons* influences community knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as community access to resources, with respect to intervention and evaluation; and

4) Track community capacity to create change and conduct evaluation as well as the implementation and evaluation of national and local initiatives, as feasible, to build the evidence base in the field.
Engage

First Lady Michelle Obama announced a video contest, *Communities on the Move*, last week while celebrating the 2nd