Connecting Program Outcome Measurement to Community Impact
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to Community Impact
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Additional examples of using program outcome learning in shaping community impact plans are welcome. Please email them to Roger Wood at roger.wood@uwa.unitedway.org.
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Introduction

As United Ways strive to deliver on the mission “To improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities,” they are looking at both new and old tools to help with the task. Program outcome measurement is one of those tools. It is not a new idea for United Ways, but its value to community impact is only beginning to be recognized. Community impact United Ways will use program outcome measurement to engage agencies and other community stakeholders in targeting community change, to shape and manage investment strategies, and to deliver on the brand promise that United Way reports results.

More than 450 United Ways have implemented program outcome measurement because of the important benefits it provides to them and the agencies they fund. They have encouraged agencies to use the learning from program outcome measurement to increase program effectiveness and communicate value to stakeholders. In an independent survey of nearly 400 United Way-funded agencies, reported in the United Way of America publication, Agency Experiences with Outcome Measurement, program directors agreed or strongly agreed that outcome measurement had helped their programs:

- Focus staff on shared goals (88%)
- Communicate results to stakeholders (88%)
- Clarify program purpose (86%)
- Identify effective practices (84%)
- Compete for resources (83%)
- Enhance record keeping (80%)
- Improve service delivery (76%)

Of program directors surveyed, 89% would recommend to directors of similar programs that they consider implementing program outcome measurement.

Program outcome measurement has value for United Ways as well. The UWA publication, Indicators that a United Way is Prepared to Plan for, Implement, Sustain, Use and Benefit from Program Outcome Measurement, notes that among the most commonly reported United Way benefits are:

- Increased accountability to donors and the community
- Enhanced marketing and fundraising messages
- An improved image and greater visibility in the community
- Greater success in retaining, maintaining and/or increasing dollars

As United Ways and their partners focus on the challenges of achieving community impact, they are discovering the contributions of program outcome measurement to their work. For example, the discipline of focusing on outcomes and using the findings to communicate, learn, and improve transfer directly to community impact. Further, agency learning that comes from identifying and measuring outcomes offers rich input into the identification of community-level issues and the development of community change strategies. Developing processes for sharing such learning on a regular basis enables United Ways to gain the full value of program outcome measurement for community impact.

“In the move to community impact, program outcome measurement is table stakes! You don’t get in the game without it.”

-Brian Gallagher
This Report

This report is about using program outcome measurement in the work of a community impact United Way. It focuses on how United Ways can make the most of the knowledge agencies are gaining from this measurement. The report:

• describes the relationship between program outcomes and community outcomes, dispelling some early assumptions
• lists ways that program outcome measurement contributes to community impact through United Ways' work with direct-service programs and by providing United Ways with knowledge and skills needed to move to the community impact model
• offers suggestions for reviewing program outcome learnings and using the findings in targeting community change
• highlights nine examples of how United Ways have connected program outcome measurement to their community impact work
• provides a checklist for mining program outcome measurement learning to help United Ways engage funded agencies in learning from their program outcome measurement efforts.
Program Outcomes and Community Outcomes: Understanding the Relationship

Outcomes are changes sought in the knowledge, attitudes, motivation, skills, behavior, condition, status, or other characteristics of a specific individual or group of individuals. Program outcomes, for example, are changes that program activities intend to create in program participants. Community outcomes are changes in a defined community population brought about by changing conditions in the community.

Some Early Assumptions
When United Ways first began implementing program outcome measurement, there were many assumptions regarding the relationship between program outcomes and community outcomes. Three of the most widely held assumptions were that:

- Funding programs with good outcomes will produce community outcomes.
- Funding programs whose outcomes align with community goals will produce community outcomes.
- Aggregating program outcome data will provide community outcome data.

There is now widespread recognition that these assumptions are not valid. Community impact is not only about improving the lives of people served by United Way-funded programs; it also is about improving the lives of people affected by pressing community issues, whether they receive services from United Way-funded agencies or not. Further, it is about changing community conditions so that fewer people are affected by those issues. Aggregating the outcomes of funded programs shows collective results for program clients following receipt of program services, but the results still are about program outcomes for program clients. The findings do not represent benefits for community populations following changes in community conditions.

The Community Impact Perspective
If program outcomes do not produce community outcomes, what does? Answering this question requires the recognition that the pressing issues in our communities have developed because of economic factors, historical trends, public and private sector practices, disconnections among community systems, and a host of other factors (see Figure 1).

Direct-service programs like those that United Ways traditionally fund generally influence only one or two of these factors: personal choices and family characteristics.¹ This doesn't mean that these aren’t good or valuable programs.

¹ Most United Way-funded health and human service programs are direct-service programs providing assistance directly to individuals and families. Instead of or in addition to providing direct service, some programs work to create change in community conditions. For example, Mothers Against Drunk Driving focuses on changing community attitudes, laws, and the administration of laws regarding drinking and driving. As a result of their efforts and others, the community environment has become less tolerant of drinking and driving, and alcohol-related accidents and deaths have fallen dramatically.
However, they are not intended to, designed to, resourced to or prepared to address all of these other factors that are causing our communities’ pressing issues. In other words, direct-service programs are often necessary but usually not sufficient for achieving community impact.

To address community issues, United Ways will be looking for new approaches and additional partners. They will be going “upstream” to create lasting changes that address the root causes of their communities’ pressing issues. They also will change their filters regarding the role of United Way-funded agencies in achieving community impact. In the traditional model, United Ways looked at community impact through the filter of the agencies they funded. They viewed community impact as the results achieved by agencies, often describing their own impact in terms of agency outputs and outcomes. This is a very narrow view of community impact that excludes the rest of United Ways’ business, as well as all of the other resources in the community (see Figure 2a).

In the new model, United Ways look at agencies through the filter of community impact (see Figure 2b). They recognize agencies as one of, but far from the only, resource needed to create community change. Many other resources in the community and all parts of the United Way’s organization will be engaged in achieving community impact.

For an allegory that illustrates the challenges of making lasting changes in community conditions, see The Ogre Story. For examples of United Ways that have mobilized communities to create sustained changes that have improved lives, see Community Impact Profiles. The Hometown Literacy Partnership offers instructions and materials for providing a hands-on experience of a community partnership that builds a plan for improving lives.
Program Outcome Measurement Increases the Effectiveness of Direct-service Programs

There is no doubt of the impact of program outcome measurement on United Ways’ work with direct services. Where implemented effectively, it is a powerful tool that contributes to:

- **A focus on results.** Because of outcome measurement, both United Ways and agencies think about program value in terms of client benefits rather than program activities.

- **The measurement of results.** Program outcome measurement quantifies the extent to which program clients achieve intended benefits.

- **Learning.** Outcome data helps United Ways and agencies better understand both clients and programs and discover which practices are more effective than others with which client groups.

- **Improvement.** The learning that comes from thoughtful analysis of program outcome data helps programs improve their services to achieve even better results for clients.

- **Investment guidance.** Including outcome information with other funding criteria helps United Ways invest in programs that are pursuing learning and improvement to increase their effectiveness.

- **Accountability.** When United Ways feature programs’ results in their marketing and campaign messages, they exhibit accountability to investors and the community and assert leadership in results-oriented philanthropy.

**Implications**

Does this mean that United Ways should stop funding programs? Definitely not! Improving lives by supporting direct-service programs is one of the investment strategies of community impact United Ways (see *The Community Investment Triangle: A Tool for Transformation* for more information).

Does it mean that United Ways should phase out program outcome measurement? Again, no! It has proven to be a valuable tool for agencies and the human service system (see box at right).

Does it mean that program outcome measurement does not have a role in the work of achieving community impact? Emphatically, no! In fact, the value of program outcome measurement will increase as United Ways and their community partners move forward with creating community change.

What does this mean? Understanding the relationship between program outcomes and community outcomes encourages United Ways to:

- Avoid creating expectations that funding programs alone will produce community outcomes.

- Develop more comprehensive approaches that are effective in achieving community change.

- Identify the ways that program outcome measurement can contribute to community impact.

- Create mechanisms for maximizing that contribution.
How Program Outcome Measurement Contributes to Community Impact

Community impact United Ways improve lives through two general strategies. One of these is investing in services that are delivered directly to individuals and families — the types of services that United Ways traditionally have supported. The other is investing in initiatives to create lasting changes in community conditions (see The Community Investment Triangle: A Tool for Transformation for more information).

Program outcome measurement is a core tool for both strategies. The previous section confirms that it makes significant contributions to United Ways’ work with direct-service programs. As the following paragraphs describe, the experience and knowledge that United Ways and their partners have gained from its implementation are substantive advantages in the move to the community impact business model. In addition, the learning that agencies gain from analyzing outcome findings help United Ways target meaningful community change efforts that improve lives.

Provides a Head Start on Implementing the Community Impact Model

Experience with program outcome measurement provides significant advantages and resources for a United Way that is pursing the new business model, including the following.

- **Program outcome measurement strengthens a United Way’s position as a trusted community impact partner and leader.** It demonstrates the organization’s commitment to achieving and reporting results and illustrates its use of facts in decision making.

- **It builds competence in measurement and analysis that United Ways can build on** to track impact on community systems and populations. United Ways that already have skills in identifying specific and appropriate outcomes, useful and measurable indicators, manageable measurement methods, and instructive approaches to analysis have a solid foundation for the challenges of measuring community impact.

- **It is essential for measuring the impact of community-change initiatives on clients of direct services.** Some initiatives to improves lives by creating lasting changes in community conditions will include steps to strengthen service delivery capacity as part of their plan for change. Program outcome measurement will show whether the changes achieved are in fact improving the lives of program clients.

- **It is itself a community-change strategy.** As a tool for learning and improvement, program outcome measurement helps increase programs’ effectiveness in serving clients. In many communities, United Way’s implementation of program outcome measurement among programs it funds has led other service providers and funders, as well as community leaders and investors, to shift from a focus on activities to a focus on results as measured by outcomes (see the National Learning Project on Using Program Outcome Data to Create Measurable Change, Vol. I for more information). The resulting changes in communities’ public and nonprofit sectors are improving lives beyond those of clients of United Way-funded programs.

- **Its implementation lays the groundwork for subsequent changes in relationships with funded agencies.** With program outcome measurement, the United Way asks agencies to think differently about the purpose of their programs and expands the traditional funding relationship to include collaboration on program effectiveness. This shift can pave the way for further collaboration around a host of community issues. In addition, much of what has been learned about working with agencies to implement program outcome measurement constructively, such as the importance of early and open communication with agencies on the new direction, inclusion of agencies in decision making, and recognition of agencies’ legitimate concerns, also are key in navigating agency relationships in the move to the community impact model (see Redefining Agency Relationships for Community Impact for more information).
Helps Target Community Issues
United Ways that promote program outcome measurement as a tool for agency learning and improvement gain insights that help identify community issues for action and create effective community-change strategies. As agencies probe outcome findings and make changes to increase program effectiveness, United Ways work with them to mine the learning that results. This collaboration can surface broader issues, such as:

- **Gaps in services.** Attempts to connect clients with services reveal which services are unavailable or are not sufficiently comprehensive to meet the range of clients’ needs.

- **Organizational and system problems.** The same attempts expose conflicting policies, lack of coordination, cultural issues, and other dynamics within and among community organizations and systems which present major obstacles for clients.

- **Community conditions that create barriers for program clients.** Client follow-up discovers conditions such as inadequate housing, lack of quality jobs, public attitudes, and other factors that stand in the way of clients’ long-term success.

- **Community populations needing special attention.** As programs learn more about their clients and clients’ networks, they recognize populations, such as middle-school children, women caring for both young children and aging parents, or an immigrant group for which literacy in their native language is rare, that are being overlooked by the broader community.

- **Issues requiring community-level intervention.** Searching for characteristics related to client success alerts programs to client issues, such as low literacy, lack of health care insurance, and lack of transportation, that are more productively understood as systemic issues requiring not just individual assistance but also community change.

- **Issues needing further study.** Programs’ observations of the effect of various conditions and responses on community populations suggest research or additional experience that can provide new approaches to old problems.
Mining Program Outcome Measurement Learning

Clearly, the insights that agencies gain from program outcome measurement can provide much substantive input to community-change efforts. However, the connection between program outcomes and community impact does not happen automatically. It occurs when the United Way asks questions and establishes systems that actively create that linkage.

Drawing Community Implications from Program Outcome Learning

An agency's review of its program outcome data can surface not only measurement challenges and ideas for increasing service effectiveness, but also challenges faced by particular client groups, community barriers to client success, and other valuable insights to help target community-change efforts. Questions to stimulate agencies' thinking about this topic include:

- Do some client groups consistently have higher or lower levels of outcome achievement than others? Which groups (certain age range, family composition, literacy level, etc.)? What explains the differences?
- What characteristics of clients, their personal networks, their situations, the services they receive, or their environments make the most difference in outcome achievement?
- Do your clients often need services or other assistance beyond the scope of your agency? What are these? Are they available and accessible?
- When you seek to refer clients to other services or coordinate your services with other agencies, what works well? What doesn’t work well and why?
- What community changes—changes in policies, practices, resource use, messages, attitudes, or other characteristics of organizations, systems, personal networks, neighborhoods—would make the biggest difference for your clients?
- What community changes would make the biggest difference in your agency’s ability to serve clients effectively?
- As you think about ways to make our community work better for your clients, what ideas do you have? What do you wish we all knew more about?

Insights of individual agencies combine for rich discussions when a United Way invites groups of programs to share perspectives, identify common experiences, and focus collectively on community issues and possible solutions. Depending on the purpose of a specific session, groups might consist of programs that offer similar services; or that serve the same clients; or that target the same outcomes; or that are located in the same geographic area; or that represent a comprehensive range of issues, delivery strategies, and other factors.

Participants look for trends and patterns that bring community issues into focus. For example:

- Similar programs have very different outcome results that are not related to client differences.
- Outcome achievement is consistently low among programs in certain geographic areas.
- Outcome achievement had been improving across programs in certain geographic areas but recently has worsened.
- Programs consistently name certain client, service, and community characteristics as important influences on outcome achievement.
- Certain services are identified frequently as unavailable, inaccessible, or difficult to work with.
- Multiple programs observe the same community conditions posing barriers to their clients’ success.

The United Way in Bristol, Connecticut invited funded agencies to help shape its community impact work related to youth. Groups of agencies collaborated to prepare concept papers identifying important community issues and possible approaches to addressing them. A number of agencies drew on their learning from program outcome measurement, along with other knowledge and experiences, in developing concept papers that provided a basis for further discussions and broader community partnerships.
• Programs repeatedly nominate the same set of community changes to create lasting benefits for populations of concern.
• Certain questions about causal factors, possible responses, and long-term results surface over and over.

Assuring Useful, Timely Input
A United Way gains the most from agencies’ program outcome learning when its policies and practices:
• Reflect an expectation that funded agencies review and learn from their program outcome measurement efforts—not only about their measurement systems and programs, but also about community issues that affect their clients and programs.
• Provide ways for funded agencies to report their learning.
• Encourage open communication of findings, both positive and negative.
• Ensure thoughtful review of reported learning by a designated individual or group.
• Provide for conversations with agencies and other partners to explore issues raised and identify additional insights, including cross-program and cross-field discovery.
• Reward agencies for learning from program outcome measurement, sharing learning with others, and responding to identified challenges.

Defined processes help United Ways assure that they mine agencies’ learning from program outcome measurement for its broader community impact implications. There are many ways to accomplish this aim. Questions United Ways consider in creating procedures and a few ideas for addressing them include:
• Do agencies report learning about their measurement systems and services and their learning related to community issues at the same time and in the same way? For example, both may be reported as part of the funding application process. Alternatively, learning related to community issues may be explored separately as part of the United Way’s process of making decisions about its intended impact.

In Richmond, Virginia as issues related to the United Way’s community impact work have surfaced, United Way staff have convened relevant agencies to discuss their learning from outcome measurement and other experiences. The conversations have helped United Way and its partners craft coordinated responses to the issues.

The Success By 6® initiative in Portland, Oregon regularly convenes representatives of funded agencies and other human service providers, the school district, Head Start, child care providers, consultants and community groups involved with young children to identify barriers and respond to challenges.

The United Way in Milwaukee, Wisconsin has held annual Lessons Learned Forums for agencies to share learning from their outcome measurement experiences.
the United Way selects focus areas, establishes priorities, defines goals and objectives, and targets community-change initiatives. Conferring with agencies experienced in a particular health or human service topic is a useful early step for a United Way body with responsibilities for that topic (e.g., an impact council responsible for a specific focus area).

- If there are regularly scheduled meetings with agencies that are not directly connected with current decision making, what mechanisms assure that conclusions are captured and used as input later when decisions about targeting community change are being made?

For example, reporting forms in centralized locations were mentioned earlier. Tickler files and designated responsibility for reviewing forms in preparation for meetings and decisions remind the United Way to use the information in a timely way.

The checklist on page 23 can help United Ways establish procedures to connect agencies’ program outcome measurement learning with their own community impact work.

Responding to the Challenges
United Ways, funded agencies, and community partners apply what they learn to strengthen individual programs and to target changes in community conditions that improve lives, not only of program clients, but of people who never receive a United Way-funded service. Addressing pressing community issues requires thinking creatively about how the community might respond. Possible responses are limitless. A few possibilities are:

- Filling gaps in services (e.g., colleges provide training on emerging health care need to develop skills of medical personnel)
- Increasing system capacity (e.g., child care teachers have skills and materials to support age-appropriate early language and literacy development.)
- Adding locations for service (e.g., schools housing after-school programs process USDA claims to facilitate snack program)
- Changing programming guidelines (e.g., school sports programs incorporate gender-specific programming)
- Changing participation guidelines (e.g., emergency response services include non-traditional service providers on crisis readiness planning team)
- Changing government policies (e.g., income eligibility guidelines are lowered to allow more low-income working families to qualify for the child health insurance program)
- Reallocating resources (e.g., hospitals relocate staff to child care centers to address children’s medical needs)
- Developing effective new practices (e.g., independent volunteer centers develop a regional website for posting volunteer opportunities; businesses provide new internships and apprenticeship opportunities for youth)
- Creating useful new partnerships (e.g., labor unions collaborate with neighborhood associations to make apprenticeships in skilled trades available to residents)
- Increased awareness of issues (e.g., community members have a shared definition of a specific problem or condition)
- Changes in community attitudes (e.g., community members are less tolerant of certain behaviors)
Examples of How United Ways Have Connected Program Outcome Measurement to Their Community Impact Work

The following are examples of how United Ways worked with funded agencies to identify learnings from program outcome measurement and used that knowledge to guide their community impact work. Examples are arranged based on how United Ways and community partners responded to identified challenges.

Increasing Cross-system Coordination

School Readiness/Ready Schools–Kindergarten Transition Project
United Way of the Columbia-Willamette
Portland, Oregon

United Way and community stakeholders recognized that the transition from early care and education programs into the public school system is a difficult time for many families. Some children found the transition to be intimidating and as a result they were not acclimating well to the school system. In neighborhoods with high numbers of immigrant and refugee families, some parents weren’t even registering for school until a few weeks into the school year.

Outcome data from United Way-funded parent education programs showed that many parents of low-income or immigrant families were not aware of school policies, procedures and expectations, and as a result were apprehensive about their future relationship with the schools. Programs also recognized that they were not communicating to the schools the kinds of tensions and apprehensions that parents and children were feeling and had not shared possible solutions. As a result, schools often were pursuing practices that increased rather than reduced the problem. For example, in one very high-poverty school, parents’ and children’s first experience with the child’s new school was a child assessment where families felt judged and were put on their guard immediately.

In an attempt to create a more welcoming and supporting introduction to the school system, United Way’s Success By 6® initiative initiated new protocols in which every child receives a home visit from his/her teacher prior to the beginning of the school year. Additionally, prior to enrolling their children in kindergarten, families in hard-to-reach communities have times throughout the year to attend activities at the school. It was found that these small changes in working with low-income families gave significant results. Children acclimated to school more quickly and parents became more active in the school and their children’s education. As a result of the success of this effort, the new protocol has been adopted by all Title I schools in the district.

How was the issue discovered?
• Success By 6® initiative regularly convenes representatives from the school district, human service providers, Head Start, child care providers, consultants and community groups involved with young children and families that face many barriers.

What data or learning suggested that there was a problem?
• Outcome data from parent education programs showed that many parents from low-income or immigrant families were not aware of school policies, procedures and expectations, and as a result were apprehensive about their future relationship with the schools.

What did United Way and funded agencies learn?
• Significant barriers exist for families entering the school system and not many organizations were focusing their energy on removing them.
• Many parents of low-income or immigrant families did not register their children for school until after the school year began.
• The transition from early childhood education programs to the public school system was intimidating for some children.
• There was a lack of communication, coordination and continuity between early childhood education and public school system staff.
• Many children of low-income or immigrant families did not perform well in school.
• Children who started behind stayed behind.

What community resources were mobilized?
• School district, human service providers, Head Start, child care providers, consultants and community groups involved with young children

What lasting changes in community conditions were created?
• Schools and early care organizations partner very closely to ease the transition to the public school system.
• Schools changed multiple protocols to make the environment more welcoming.
• Teachers visit each family in their home prior to the beginning of the school year.
• Home visitation program is replicated in all Title I schools.
• Other school districts are now looking at the model and replicating parts.

How were lives improved?
• Children adjust more quickly to the school environment.
• Children’s school performance has improved.
• Parents’ participation in school activities and their children’s education increases.

Coordinated Service Delivery in Schools
United Way of Metropolitan Nashville
Nashville, Tennessee

The United Way’s quarterly monitoring of program outcome data revealed that funded agencies were having difficulty acquiring student data such as grades, attendance records and achievement test scores through the schools. This information was essential to show the extent to which students were achieving outcomes for agency educational programs. Access to student data through the schools was limited because there were no guidelines for the relationship between schools and community providers and providers did not have a clear understanding of school needs.

Using a multi-year grant from a private donor, United Way facilitated meetings with school representatives and school-based community providers to develop a coordinated system of service delivery, which is now being piloted in key Title I schools. This system includes a website that enables schools to track the activities of all volunteers in each school and also enables community agencies to submit an application to schools to provide services. As part of the application process, agencies detail how their services align with the district’s strategic plan and individual school needs as well as what outcomes they propose for the school, its students and their families. Principals then negotiate services and develop community partnerships that best meet the needs of the school and its students.

How was the issue discovered?
• United Way regularly convenes funded agencies and other community partners to review outcome data.
What data or learning suggested that there was a problem?

- Outcome data revealed that funded agencies were having difficulty acquiring student data such as grades, attendance records and achievement test scores through the schools.

What did United Way and its funded agencies learn?

- There was no systematic process for the school district or individual schools to work with community providers.
- Providers did not have a clear understanding of the schools’ needs.

What community resources were mobilized?

- Private donor who gave a multi-year grant and the public school system

What lasting changes in community conditions were created?

- Schools and community providers have a process for communicating and partnering, have clear expectations of each other, and can track volunteers and services online.
- Programs learn and improve based on student outcome data.
- Funding requirements for school-based providers are consistent with school district requirements and needs.

How were lives improved?

- Students participate in more effective educational programs.

Filling a Gap in Service

**Greater Richmond Homelessness Respite**
**United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg**
**Richmond, Virginia**

Through informal discussions and planned meetings, United Way and agencies that work with people who are homeless recognized that some emergency shelter beds were being occupied by homeless people who were recovering from serious illness or surgery. This use wasn’t compatible with the goal of the shelters, which is to provide temporary shelter for people moving to transitional housing or independent living. In addition, outcome data showed that the shelters were not meeting the needs of those recovering from illness. The shelters did not have the medical services needed to assist these individuals, and as a result, re-entry into the expensive hospital system often occurred.

Convening representatives from shelters, nursing facilities, American Red Cross and the Visiting Nurses Association, United Way asked, “If someone is homeless, where do they go, particularly after hospital discharge, when they need to recover from illness or surgery?” Finding that there was no service available, representatives developed a medical respite program at an adult care home. Today the program continues as an independent United Way-funded agency and includes services for those recovering from sub-acute medical or mental health conditions. This exercise in problem solving helped provide people in a housing crisis with a place to recover, freed shelters from accepting clients that they were unprepared to serve, and reduced recidivism to emergency rooms and hospitals.

How was the issue discovered?

- Funded agencies are required to identify barriers to program success when they report outcome measurement results. United Way and agencies periodically meet to discuss barriers.
What data or learning suggested that there was a problem?
• Outcome data showed that shelters were accepting inappropriate placements because people experiencing homelessness had no where else to go after a hospital discharge.
• Outcome data showed that the shelters were not meeting the needs of homeless people recovering from illness.

What did United Way and funded agencies learn?
• Some shelter beds were being used by people who are homeless and recovering from illness or surgery.
• People who are homeless and ill require a higher level of medical care than shelters are able to provide.
• There is a need for an appropriate facility for people in a housing crisis recovering from illness or surgery.

What community resources were mobilized?
• Agencies that work with people who are homeless, nursing facilities, the American Red Cross, and the Visiting Nurses Association

What lasting changes in community conditions were created?
• Shelters for people who are homeless are able to focus on the clients they were designed to assist.
• A medical/mental health respite program now serves people experiencing both homelessness and a short-term medical or mental health issue.

How were lives improved?
• People who are homeless and recovering from serious illness or surgery have an appropriate facility to recover.

Changing Practices to Increase System Quality and Capacity

Standards for Food Pantries
United Way of Greater Milwaukee
Milwaukee, WI

In many communities basic-needs programs can point the way to community-change opportunities. In working with agencies to identify program outcomes and review measurement data, the United Way learned that there were no common standards of service in place for the network of food pantries in the greater Milwaukee area. Measurement data indicated that families in need were receiving food, but client feedback showed that distributed food was not meeting family needs.

The United Way, the Hunger Task Force (a local food bank), and a network of local food pantries created standards for food distribution that included giving a 3-day supply, providing nutritionally balanced foods, and considering culture and family composition in food selection. Training in the new standards was provided for the distribution sites.

In planning for implementation of the standards, the food pantries identified another barrier. Providing nutritionally balanced food is difficult as fresh foods have additional refrigeration needs. United Way and the Hunger Task Force worked together to solicit a donor willing to provide $100,000 for a new refrigerated truck that delivers fresh food to pantries. The truck bears the logos of United Way, the agency, and the donor, symbolizing the cooperative effort that created this sustained change for people in the community.
**How were the issues discovered?**
- United Way review of program outcome data in the Basic Needs impact area revealed a range of outcomes with no standards and widely varying results. Convening the hunger-related programs lead to a commitment to work together and establish standards for food distribution.

**What data or learning suggested that there was a problem?**
- Measurement data indicated that families in need were receiving food, but client feedback showed that distributed food was not meeting family needs.

**What did United Way and funded agencies learn?**
- There were no standards for distributed food.
- Few programs had thought about providing nutritionally balanced food.
- Simply doing more of what United Way was already doing-funding more pantries-wouldn’t help meet the new standards.
- Implementing the standards would require changes in access, storage and delivery of foods.
- Pantries needed a greater variety of foods.
- Few pantries had access to fresh foods including produce, meat and dairy products.
- Few pantries had resources for refrigeration.

**What community resources were mobilized?**
- Hunger Task Force (a local food bank), a network of local food pantries, and a local donor who provided a $100,000 to purchase a refrigerated truck.

**What lasting changes in community conditions were created?**
- Standards for distributed food now are in place.
- Pantries receive fresh surplus food delivered in a refrigerated truck.
- Food pantries include fresh foods and refrigeration capabilities.

**How were lives improved?**
- People who use emergency food services now receive a 3-day supply of food that is nutritionally balanced, culturally familiar and appropriate for the family composition.

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**Youth Development Programming Guidelines**

**United Way of Greater Milwaukee**

**Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

The United Way conducts an annual Lessons Learned Forum each year to provide funded agencies an opportunity to discuss learnings from their outcome measurement efforts. Outcome data of agencies that focus on youth development revealed that boys across programs were achieving outcomes at levels significantly higher than girls. While exploring possible explanations, the United Way and its partners discovered that youth programs that targeted boys were receiving more funding than those that targeted girls, and that few agencies considered the role of gender in their program design or delivery.

Simply awarding more money to programs that serve girls would not have reduced the disparity in outcome attainment. Instead, United Way worked with agencies, donors and women’s organizations and established two goals in youth development programming: parity in funding, and gender-appropriate programming. They then created the Girls’ Initiative to address these two goals. This collaborative effort raised over $250,000 to address these goals. As a result, a significant increase in resources is available for girl’s programming and girls have are participating in programs that are compatible with girls’ culture, interests and abilities.
How were the issues discovered?
• Discussion of outcome data from youth development programs in an annual forum for agencies.

What data or learning suggested that there was a problem?
• Outcome data showed that girls were achieving outcomes at lower levels than boys.

What did United Way and funded agencies learn?
• Programs for boys were receiving significantly more funding per capita than programs for girls.
• Most programs had not considered gender differences when designing their services.
• Simply funding more programs serving girls would not have changed the different levels of performance because programs were not gender appropriate.

What community resources were mobilized?
• Ms Foundation, other funders, and youth development programs

What lasting changes in community conditions were created?
• United Way, other funders, the Ms Foundation and youth development programs established the Girls’ Initiative.
• Funders and youth development agencies have revised their guidelines to assure parity in funding and gender-appropriate programming.

How were lives improved?
• Girls are participating in programs that are compatible with girls’ culture, interests and abilities.
• Girls have a significant increase in resources available for their programs.

Read To Succeed Initiative
United Way of Metropolitan Nashville
Nashville, Tennessee

United Way-funded child care programs were finding that very few inner-city children entering kindergarten possessed the early language and literacy skills needed to be successful in school. School records confirmed this finding. In response, the United Way developed the Read To Succeed (RTS) initiative to assure that inner-city children attending United Way-funded child care centers have these skills.

RTS is now piloting several scientifically-based early literacy interventions with four inner-city child care centers serving approximately 500 low-income children ages 0-5. Interventions include extensive professional development for teachers; enhancements to classroom environments to better support language and literacy skill acquisition; floods of books for teachers, children, and families to use; and research-based early literacy curricula that are consistent with that used in the school district. In addition, RTS is beginning to pilot literacy workshops for families.

How was this discovered?
• United Way regularly convenes funded agencies and other community partners to review outcome data related to school readiness.

What data or learning suggested that there was a problem?
• Child care center outcome data revealed that very few inner-city children entering kindergarten possessed the early language and literacy skills needed to be successful in school.
What did United Way and its funded agencies learn?
- The majority of teachers in child care settings do not have the training to support early language and literacy development.
- Specific environmental enhancements are needed to support language and literacy development in young children.
- Low-income parents often do not have the resources to support language and literacy development in the home.

What community resources were mobilized?
- Child care centers, other agencies serving young children, and a private donor who provided a multi-year grant.

What lasting changes in community conditions were created?
- Child care teachers in four inner-city child care centers receive extensive (over 24 hours annually) professional development specific to early language and literacy development.
- Child care teachers have skills and materials to support age-appropriate early language and literacy development.
- These centers now deliver family literacy workshops and house family libraries.
- Classroom environments have been modified to support language and literacy training.
- Classroom environments have received significant improvements including a wide array of age-appropriate books, writing centers, listening centers.

How were lives improved?
- Children’s early language and literacy skills are beginning to improve.
- Families have access to quality, age-appropriate children’s books.

Regional Volunteer Systems Development
United Way of the Columbia-Willamette
Portland, Oregon

All six volunteer centers in the 4-county United Way region reported outcomes showing low placement and retention rates. Follow-up revealed individuals seeking volunteer opportunities were not able to find desired placements, volunteer managers were not receiving the training needed to manage the volunteer centers effectively, and the region’s volunteer centers seldom worked together and provided duplicative information to prospective volunteers.

In response, United Way invested in Volunteerhere.com, a project in which the six volunteer centers collaborated to create a common website where agencies can post volunteer opportunities and potential volunteers can access these opportunities. United Way also developed the marketing plan for the website. In addition, it has created a common volunteer center manager training curriculum that is now used at all six volunteer centers.

The six volunteer centers are now partners working together to increase volunteerism as an effective resource for community change. Some agencies note that they are now doing their work differently because of this change. They are now able to recruit and retain the volunteers they need, which allows for additional programming.

How was the issue discovered?
- United Way’s RFP for volunteerism stated that special consideration would be given to submissions by broad-based collaborations addressing systemic change. As a result, volunteer centers increased their collaboration, sharing of outcome data, and training coordination.
What data or learning suggested that there was a problem?
• Throughout the 4-county United Way region, individuals seeking volunteer opportunities were not able to find desired placements.

What did the United Way and its funded agencies learn?
• All six volunteer centers in the 4-county region worked independently and with little coordination.
• Volunteer manager training was inconsistent and inadequate, and, as a result, volunteer center managers were not receiving the training needed to manage the centers effectively.
• Region’s volunteer centers lacked coordination and a shared vision.
• Levels of volunteer placement and retention were low.

What community resources were mobilized?
• Six volunteer centers within a 4-county area

What lasting changes in community conditions were created?
• A regional website posts volunteer opportunities for the area’s six volunteer centers (www.volunteerhere.com).
• A common volunteer center manager training curriculum is now used within the 4-county region.
• Portland-area volunteer efforts have a shared vision and engage in ongoing collaboration.
• Agencies have more volunteers.
• Agencies are able to provide additional programming.
• A more coordinated, regional volunteer system has been developed.

How were lives improved?
• Volunteers have easier access to volunteer opportunities throughout the region.
• Volunteers are more likely to find desired placements.
• Volunteers volunteer for a longer period of time.
• Volunteer center managers receive consistent and better-quality training.

Increasing Access to Resources

Community Voicemail for Homeless Persons
United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg
Richmond, Virginia

Agencies assisting people who are homeless told the United Way that contacting and assisting people after they have left a shelter is very difficult because they don’t have phones. In response to this challenge, these organizations decided to implement a Community Voicemail Program. The program provides dedicated voicemail numbers for people who are homeless or experiencing a housing crisis for six months. Individuals can leave this phone number with potential employers, medical providers and other service agencies, and then check on their messages by calling from a pay phone.

Initially, funding was not available for this program. Fortuitously, United Way resource development staff were searching for a targeted approach to re-engage the regional phone carrier, which had not made a corporate contribution to United Way in several years. The two problems were a perfect match. Once presented with evidence of need and a plan for action, the regional telephone carrier agreed to a 3-year grant to implement the system.
**How was this discovered?**
- Funded agencies are required to identify barriers to program success when they report outcome measurement results. United Way and agencies periodically meet to discuss barriers.

**What data or learning suggested that there was a problem?**
- Client outcomes were being met while individuals were at the shelter, but longer-term follow-up to ascertain stability was often impossible.

**What did United Way and funded agencies learn?**
- Programs cannot easily contact or assist people after they leave shelters because they do not have telephones.

**What community resources were mobilized?**
- Regional phone carrier that made a large corporate contribution and agencies assisting people who are homeless

**What lasting changes in community conditions were created?**
- Community Voicemail Program enables people who have left homeless shelters to connect with services and other resources.
- Programs can contact and assist people who are homeless after they leave the shelter.
- United Way has re-engaged a corporate partner.

**How were lives improved?**
- People who are homeless have a way to get messages and a contact number to give potential employers, medical providers, and other service agencies.

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**Meals for Day Laborers**

**United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg**

**Richmond, Virginia**

The United Way and agencies assisting unemployed men in the emergency shelter system realized that many were not participating in the city’s day-labor program. They discovered that conditions in the community were forcing the men to choose between having work and having food. The hot breakfast program provided by local churches began an hour after the trucks that pick up day laborers had made their rounds. Once this barrier was discovered, United Way found churches within the community willing to fill this need. Now day laborers receive not only an earlier breakfast, but also a bagged lunch to take with them. Now many unemployed men are able to gain work experience, generate income, and move closer to regular employment.

**How was the issue discovered?**
- Funded agencies are required to identify barriers to program success when they report outcome measurement results. United Way and agencies periodically meet to discuss barriers.

**What data or learning suggested that there was a problem?**
- Many men staying at the emergency shelters were not participating in the city’s day labor program.

**What did United Way and funded agencies learn?**
- The free community breakfast program was served after day laborers were picked up for work.
What community resources were mobilized?
- Churches that can provide an earlier breakfast option

What lasting changes in community conditions were created?
- Church meal programs provide an earlier breakfast option and a bagged lunch for unemployed men in the emergency shelter system participating in the day-labor program.
- The meal program is serving those in need more effectively.

How were lives improved?
- Hard-to-employ men are gaining work experience.
The following is a checklist to help United Ways determine if they are engaging funded agencies in learning from their program outcome measurement efforts and using that knowledge to guide their community impact work.

☐ We have explicitly communicated the expectation that funded agencies review and learn from their program outcome measurement efforts—not only about their measurement systems and programs, but also about community issues that affect their client and programs.

☐ We provide ways for funded agencies to report learning from program outcome measurement to us.

☐ We have a mechanism for recording agency insights that surface informally—e.g., during conversations, training and technical assistance sessions, and in other settings.

☐ Our policies and procedures encourage an atmosphere of open communication and learning among funded agencies.

☐ We have a process and designated individual(s) for reviewing reported learning from program outcome measurement.

☐ We communicate with individual agencies about their learning and its implications for both their program and our community impact work.

☐ We have conversations with groups of agencies focused on identifying additional insights, including cross-program and cross-field discovery.

☐ We engage funded agencies in conversations with other community partners regarding issues and possible responses.

☐ We reward funded agencies for their efforts to learn from program outcome measurement, share their learning with others, and respond to identified challenges.
Related Resources on United Way Online

- *Agency Experiences with Outcome Measurement* (keyword: OMExperience)
- *Community Impact Profiles* (keyword: CIProfiles)
- *The Hometown Literacy Partnership Experience* (keyword: Hometown)
- *Indicators that a United Way is Prepared to Plan for, Implement, Sustain, Use and Benefit from Program Outcome Measurement* (keyword: OMIndicators)
- *The Ogre Story* (keyword: Ogre)
- *Redefining Agency Relationships for Community Impact* (keyword: RedefineAgency)