

# Mobilization Matters

## Assessing Your United Way's Capacity for Community Mobilization

### Background

**Mobilizing is a lot of hard work!** Before making the commitment to undertake a mobilization effort, thoughtfully consider the benefits and challenges of such an endeavor. Take the time to conduct an assessment of your internal organizational capacity. Assess the commitment of staff and volunteers to determine if the collective “you” is ready. Then take a look at the overall community. Is the timing right? Are the resources and public will in place? Will a mobilization duplicate what is already going on in the community? Can you access and analyze data to pinpoint issues, geographic areas and/or populations that should be targeted? (See *Mobilization Matters: Assessing Community Capacity for Mobilization.*)



This technical assistance brief is designed to help United Ways make the decision to develop a United Way-led initiative. It has been developed with input from Directors of United Way Success By 6® and Bridges To Success® mobilization efforts nationwide that have a minimum of three years experience.

Experience by United Ways indicates that adequate resources, inclusive processes, and collaborative skills are all needed in order to face the challenges inherent in a Community Mobilization. Skilled negotiation and mediation are required. Significant organizational change may be needed, and values may need to be re-examined. The payoff comes in the form of benefits to: (1) the United Way; (2) donors; (3) the United Way Campaign; (4) partners and stakeholders; (5) the overall community; and, (6) individuals.

Community mobilization can build on the abilities and capacities of United Ways to:

- Serve as a catalyst for positive community impact;
- Build upon effective practices;
- Coalesce and bridge diverse sectors and nontraditional partnerships;
- Provide leadership in outcome-focused planning and measurement to effect lasting change within the community; and,
- Engage the entire community to create a common vision and goal.

### Introduction

**Community mobilization begins** with a desire to better the lives of children, young people, families, or address other specific populations, geographic areas or issues. Desire alone, though, is not enough. Any United Way wanting to mobilize the community to measurably improve outcomes for people must bring specific competencies to the task. Thoughtful organizational consideration of your United Way's capacity to mobilize the community must be the first step. This precedes skill building, identification of stakeholders, etc. Your United Way must have the desire, will and basic knowledge to handle the challenges ahead.



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assessing capacity

# building on abilities



## If it is Difficult, Why Engage in Community Mobilization?

The evidence shows that mobilization builds community! Mobilization yields multiple benefits for United Ways and donors. Some are listed below.

### Benefits to United Way Community Mobilization:

- Expands the reach of United Way to additional partners, residents, stakeholders and donors.
- Develops United Way staff and volunteer leadership skills in community building.
- Provides a “manageable” entrée into community building.
- Appeals to volunteers who otherwise might not get involved with United Way.
- Offers United Way an opportunity to work in partnership with progressive, nontraditional organizations and individuals.
- Creates a public presence and image for United Way as a solutions provider.
- Changes community policies, practices, and procedures that a single organization could not accomplish alone (or those considered risky to pursue alone).
- Infuses new energy into United Way.
- Creates “win-win” situations for all partners.
- Pools resources and clout for easier achievement of a common community vision.
- Increases mobilization participants’ and the United Way’s visibility as leaders in the community.

### Mobilization: Organizational Change

- Necessitates that United Way do business differently than in the past.
- Necessitates sharing the credit for accomplishments among all partners and stakeholders.
  - Necessitates dedicated full-time staff for the initiative.
  - Necessitates high level skills be present among staff and volunteers.

When a multi-sector initiative is considered desirable in the community, it often leads to organizational change and how the United Way is perceived within the community. United Ways reported in the *Bank of America/United Way of America Expansion Initiative Report*

multiple  
benefits

(2000-2001) that implementing an initiative:

- “Shifted the vision, structure, and role of United Way in the community when the five-year strategic plan was implemented.”
- “Changed the role of United Way from grant maker to a catalyst for building partnerships among more than 300 health and service organizations.”
- “Elevated United Way’s position as an advocate, and as a mobilizing force to leverage additional resources.”
- “Broadened community exposure and expanded its sphere of influence beyond the annual campaign.”
- “Improved the organization’s image as a respected messenger that promotes the idea that investment in prevention is a wise investment.”
- “Brought nontraditional partners to the table (school systems and foundations).”
- “Showcased accomplishments in the philanthropic community.”

### Benefits for Donors

United Way experiences show that:

- Investments increase through leveraging of additional support and resources.
- Strategies that address systems barriers and enhance prevention efforts allow for direct donor participation.
- Prevention reduces the “after the fact” costs of intervention strategies related to emergency health care, special education, untreated physical, mental and emotional conditions, foster care, elder care, etc.

A longitudinal research study showed that for every \$1 invested locally, \$7.16 was saved due to lower education and welfare expenditures combined with gains in productivity.<sup>1</sup>

Of the more than \$4 billion raised and leveraged by United Ways annually, approximately \$1.7 billion is allocated to programs that serve children, youth and their families. United Ways now demonstrate success, both locally and nationally in leveraging public and private resources beyond the annual campaign and beyond program support, in large part, through

<sup>1</sup>The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project. Ypsilanti, Michigan. Longitudinal study of preschool children from age 3 to age 27.

initiatives.<sup>2</sup> Aligning these two sets of resource development efforts with each other, and integrating mobilization efforts with United Way communications, marketing and funding work, increases the potential for leveraged funding and for generating sustained support for mobilization. It also expands Major Gift development opportunities, the goals and objectives of a donor’s investment portfolio, and improves the connection to donors by meeting the priorities of donors in the community. Last year alone, Success By 6, and Bridges To Success leveraged in excess of \$15 million above the grant funds provided by United Way of America.

### Examples of Leveraged Resources Through Mobilization

#### United Way of Siouxland, Sioux City, Iowa

Due to Success By 6, a broader community collaboration known as SHIP was established. The SHIP partnership positioned Success By 6 to leverage \$775,475 from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and School Ready Funds.

#### United Way of Genesee County Flint, Michigan

Since 1998, via leadership in Bridges to Success, the United Way of Genesee County in Flint, Michigan has worked directly with schools in 21st Century after-school efforts. Bridges to Success has served as a model that other school districts are using to support youth development, parental involvement, and human service delivery coordination. Collaborative efforts were initially forged among three school districts at the elementary and middle school levels.

Recently, this effort was dramatically expanded to include the Genesee County Family Coordinating Council, all twenty-one Genesee County school districts, over 35 agencies, and Mott Middle College. Together, these partners submitted an application for TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) support to the Michigan Family Independence Agency, a countywide organization for after-school programming. A grant of almost \$3 million was awarded.

<sup>2</sup> *News You Can Use: United Way of America’s Research Newsletter*: October 2001. (United Ways leveraged \$4.7 billion in total resources in 2000-2001. Revenue beyond Campaign totaled \$190 million. United Ways, during the same period, were able to leverage an additional \$266 million in support from major community stakeholders for important community building activities).

### Benefits for Campaign

(as reported by United Ways in the *Success By 6 Bank of America 2000-2001 Report*)

- “Increased campaign giving (up to 40 percent of the increase in campaign giving was due to Success By 6 for a single United Way)”
- “Increased membership in the Alexis de Tocqueville Society”
- “Improved the United Way image through investment in prevention”
- “Expanded Major Gifts development opportunities, and the goals and objectives of the investment portfolio”
- “Improved our connection to donors by meeting the priorities of donors in the community.”

The example below demonstrates the impact of mobilization initiatives on United Way Campaign in one community.

leveraging resources

#### Orange County United Way (OCUW), Irvine, California Initiatives Increased Campaign

OCUW reported that, “Success By 6 is highly marketable, and demonstrated tremendous impact on the OCUW 1999-2000 Campaign (*Forty percent of new dollars raised resulted from Success By 6, and the Keeping Kids On Track Initiative targeting ages 7-17*).”

Success By 6 was incorporated into the OCUW Business Plan as a significant priority and is “the organization’s template for creating future initiatives attractive to the mega-gift.” Further, OCUW reports that Success By 6 has leveraged over \$1.6 million as follows:

<b>In-kind Donations:</b>	
• Success By 6 Strategic Planning:	\$ 1,900
• Proposal development:	49,000
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>50,900</b>
<b>Cash Donations:</b>	
• Mega Donors	\$1,000,000
• Toqueville Donors:	133,416
• OCUW Board of Directors	150,000
• Sanwa Bank	30,000
• Fluor Foundation	25,000
• Children & Families Commission of Orange County	185,715
• UWA Technical Assistance Grant	4,000
• PacifiCare Foundation:	30,000
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>\$1,558,131</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,609,031</b>

## Benefits for the Community

### Multi-sector mobilization:

- Promotes community ownership and expands the base of support for work.
- Creates strategies that are effective in reaching under-served populations and communities of color.
- Promotes resident and consumer-led decision-making.
- Creates a community-wide agenda for change.
- Mobilizes a community's collective assets to produce results for children, youth, and families.
- Builds a solid foundation of mutual accountability.
- Increases access to preventative care and services.
- Demonstrates measurable community-wide change.
- Helps all stakeholders celebrate positive change in their community.

## Considerations for United Ways

**Step One:** United Way staff might use a checklist to assess the “external-to-United Way” environment and jump-start organizational thinking. Is formation of a community-wide initiative warranted? If the majority of answers to the questions on the checklist below are “yes”, a mobilization effort might be well timed.

**Step Two:** As staff (or as volunteers), assess what engaging in mobilization will mean for your United Way. After filling in a worksheet like the one on page 5, determine if your United Way is ready to face the challenges inherent in mobilizing the community. Do possible remedies to identified challenges come to mind that are practical and feasible? If so, the United Way may be ready to lead coalition efforts.

## Internal Challenges

**Step Three:** All right, now take a look at your United Way. Leadership of your United Way might find the assessment on page 6 helpful to examine current organizational capacities. Each capacity listed is critical to mobilization success.

Depending on the results of the staff's assessment, a discussion with key staff and volunteers may be in order. The following questions are offered as one method for facilitating an in-depth discussion.

## Assessing Capacity and Making the Commitment

1. What is the vision of your organization? The mission?
2. What is currently in place in your United Way to promote positive results toward implementing the mission and achieving that vision?
3. What results have been achieved to-date related to your mission and vision?
4. What forum(s) exists to promote collaborative planning and implementation in your United Way?
5. What sectors of the community are currently involved in your United Way? How are they involved?
6. What excites you about mobilization as an approach to achieve results for children, youth or families? What makes you concerned or uneasy?
7. What strengths does your United Way have that you might build on in Community Mobilization?
8. What previous experiences have you had with anything like Community Mobilization? What were the results?
9. What barriers might exist to a Community Mobilization effort? What are the underlying difficulties to overcome those barriers?

## Checklist

Question	Yes	No
1. Are you seeing the same community “players” at all meetings regarding children, youth and their families?		
2. Are new 501(c) 3 organizations cropping up to address specific issues in the community?		
3. There are no existing coalition or collaborative efforts in the community that are in place to address the needs in which United Way is interested.		
4. Are most of the needed resources in place-is it more a matter of creating the “public will”?		
5. Are existing community sectors and institutions tiring of the old ways of doing business together?		
6. Is there an increasing knowledge in the community that what has been done in the past simply is not working?		
7. Are the community “powerbrokers” accessible? (i.e., does a newly elected Mayor need his/her own issue?)		

10. What are your options to deal with those barriers? What are pros and cons of each option?
11. What new roles (staff or volunteer) might be required for Community Mobilization?
12. What new skills (staff or volunteers) will be required for Community Mobilization?
13. What is the likely impact of Community Mobilization on your United Way? Agencies? Campaign?
14. How does mobilizing the community relate to your United Way's core competencies (customer intimacy, product excellence, and operational excellence)?
15. What difference might Community Mobilization make for children, youth, and families in your community?
16. Are you willing to make a commitment to Community Mobilization as a new (or expanded) role for your United Way?

- **Strong relationships with agencies:** Non-profit service providers represent a solid presence in the community, a direct connection to community residents and a body of expertise needed by the Mobilization.
- **Relationships with diverse sectors of the community:** So much of what makes mobilization efforts successful depends on new types of partnerships—the faith community, the media, the business community, neighborhood residents, etc.
- **Experience or access to experience in outcome-focused strategic planning:** A strategic plan represents the true starting point for any initiative and the outcome-focused process through which consensus and a shared vision is developed.
- **Experience with community mobilization or coalition building:** Skills needed to lead one mobilization effort are transferable to others.
- **Knowledge of and commitment to outcome-focused planning, funding, and measurement:** Outcome-focused planning is the heart of each Mobilization. This capacity differentiates United Way initiatives from others at the local and

## Necessary Capacity

Experience of existing Success By 6 and Bridges To Success initiatives has shown that leading any mobilization effort will be easier if the United Way has the following:

### Worksheet: Challenges in Community Mobilizing

Challenge	Possible Remedy
Tension for United Way. Examples: How much authority is given to the coalition?	Willingness and ability to share leadership and power among all stakeholders.
Changes in community policies, practices and procedures may not be easy and/or popular.	Problem-solving, negotiation and mediation skills
Requires different skills than staffs have currently.	May need to recruit people with different skills.
Requires personal commitment to lead by example.	Willingness and “know-how” to create “win-win” for all
Current Board composition based on historical role of UW in the community.	Willingness to partner with stakeholders who have not been involved in UW historically.
Public perception that UW only raises money.	Commitment of resources, leadership and energy to create credibility.
Historical function of UW.	Willingness to “think out of the box”.
Community as a whole does not have needed skills or will to mobilize successfully.	May require new trainings, information sharing, site visits to other cities.

## Internal Assessment Guide for United Way Staff

**Organizational Capacities Needed**

YES

NO

**Potential for organizational change/enhancement or new partnership(s) to address this capacity. (Describe)****Are these available?**

CPO Commitment  
 Board Chair commitment  
 Community Building experience  
 Allocable staff time  
 Experience in changing formal systems and informal networks  
 Knowledge of outcome-focused planning, funding, and measurement  
 Public policy experience  
 Partnerships with business  
 Partnerships with government  
 Partnerships with non-profits  
 Partnerships with higher education  
 Partnerships with neighborhoods  
 Partnerships with other funders  
 Partnerships with the health and medical communities  
 Partnerships with the media  
 Partnerships with the faith communities  
 Partnerships with civic organizations  
 Partnerships with law enforcement  
 Partnerships with the judiciary  
 Relationships with the consumers of community services  
 Partnerships with grassroots groups  
 Partnerships with the schools  
 Interested donors  
 Space for meetings  
 Financial resources (staff, meetings, supplies, etc.)  
 Experience in facilitating collaborative work  
 Data about your community

**Are these processes in place?**

Community Needs and Assets/Capacity Assessment  
 Forum(s) to promote collaborative planning  
 Shared decision-making  
 Targeted fundraising  
 Initiative-based marketing  
 Forum(s) for advocacy  
 Mechanism(s) for reporting results

**Are these values evident in your day to day business?**

Inclusiveness/diversity  
 Prevention  
 Public/private partnerships  
 Efforts to alter the community and its systems  
 Risk taking  
 Leveraging Resources  
 Outcome-based processes  
 Shared Power/leadership

national levels. All initiatives must start with the “end in mind”. Expertise in identifying and measuring community changes resulting from collaborative efforts, and/or identified and measured organizational-level change is critical.

- **Mobilization integrated into United Way functions such as campaign, marketing, and branding:** United Way campaign uses Mobilization to attract donors and Mobilization is prominently featured in United Way marketing materials.
- **United Way skills as a facilitator, convener and broker of major stakeholders in community:** United Way brings together leaders to work collaboratively in addressing community issues.
- **United Way thinking that extends beyond program, agency and services to broader changes in community systems and informal networks:** Mobilizations recognize that no single program; agency or even group of agencies can have a significant, long-term impact on the status of individuals’ well being. Short-term impact may occur at the program level for program participants, but only community change may yield long-term outcomes for children, youth and their families.
- **Taken a stand on policy issues:** Some United Ways are hesitant to engage in public policy. They are apprehensive about alienating donors. Changes in public policy, however, will yield financial support for United Ways’ member agencies and funded programs.

### How Have United Ways Started Making the Shift to Community Mobilization?

**Step Four:** Let’s take your initial thinking to another issue. What does it take to get started? See the sidebar on page 7 for an example of one United Way.

### Next Steps

**Start small!** Do not attempt to change the entire community all at once. As evidenced in the example of the United Way of Alamance County, North Carolina: (1) identify a specific need/assess the community’s assets (See United Way of America’s *Compass II: Guide to Community Building*); and, (2) plan small,

### United Way of Alamance County, Burlington, North Carolina

At the United Way Board of Directors retreat in January 2000 and in their strategic plan, the United Way board adopted a focus change for the organization. The United Way is extending their role from “the funder of a family of agencies” to the role of a “community problem-solver”.

The United Way of Alamance County appointed an Education Task Force. The Task Force, in their September 2000 Report, recommended funding for afterschool programs as a response to the crisis of the potentially high percentage of students who will not pass the state-mandated end-of-grade tests. The Task Force met with school district administrators to learn about the current situation with testing and a newly funded (federal monies) 3-year grant for an afterschool program in east Burlington. Members of the Task Force also met with representatives of the five youth organizations funded by United Way (Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club and the 4-H) to discuss their program activities and the extent to which “at-risk” students are involved in those programs.

School administrators agreed that an increased number of afterschool programs were needed and that existing programs should be strengthened in order to maximize the number of children successfully completing the end-of-grade tests. There was agreement that well-balanced programming was needed that includes cultural enrichment, character development, sports, the arts, as well as academic skill building. The Task Force’s findings stated, “By using the time period from 3:00-6:00 p.m. constructively, the number of children who succeed in school and pass the end-of-grade tests can be increased.”

Further, the United Way-funded youth programs were experiencing difficulties reaching “at-risk” children. The Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and the 4-H depended upon volunteers to lead their programs. Such volunteers were increasingly difficult to recruit and retain. Additionally, some of the programs depended upon participant fees to operate; limiting the numbers of low-income “at-risk” children able to take part.

As a result of this assessment, the United Way Education Task Force recommended that United Way of Alamance County:

- 1) Designate \$100,000 to fund new and expanded afterschool programs for “at-risk” students in the 2001-2001 budget review process;
- 2) Convene other interested community groups to encourage their participation in development of a plan (with support from the School Board and district administration) for afterschool programming; and
- 3) Charge the Education Task Force to continue its work in order to develop implementation plans for items 1 and 2.

easy steps for mobilizing other partners (think beyond the traditional health and human service sectors). Other *Mobilization Matters* discuss the topics of: data collection (to see if the local research bears out the community’s perception of the needs); identification and recruitment of stakeholders; and, outcome-focused planning.



The following references and sources were utilized in developing this document:

**Bank of America/United Way of America  
Success By 6® Expansion Initiative Report  
2000-2001.** United Way of America.

[www.familiesandwork.org](http://www.familiesandwork.org)

[www.edc.org](http://www.edc.org)

[www.scn.org](http://www.scn.org)

**News You Can Use: United Way of America's  
Research Newsletter.** October 2001.

[www.venturephilanthropypartners.org](http://www.venturephilanthropypartners.org)

**The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project.**

[www.ncbn.org](http://www.ncbn.org)

Ypsilanti, Michigan. Longitudinal study of preschool children from age 3 to age 27. Available by contacting Success By 6 staff at United Way of America.

[www.datexinc.com](http://www.datexinc.com)

# mobilization

The Mobilization for America's Children seeks to help local United Ways build the capacity of communities to focus on improving the lives of children, youth and their families. This is achieved by addressing healthy early childhood development and school readiness (for children ages 0-6); positive development and educational success (for school-aged children and youth); and preparation and support for young people in transition (foster care, school-to-work). The focus is on developing an outcome-focused plan for community collaboration which addresses each age group.

The Mobilization for America's Children assists United Ways by providing technical assistance, training, networking and success stories, and by helping to establish support systems for those addressing issues facing children, youth and families in every community.

The purpose of the *Mobilization Matters* technical assistance briefs is to provide simple step-by-step assistance to you on various topics related to mobilizing multi-sector initiatives. *Mobilization Matters* briefs are designed to be easy-to-use to help streamline the thinking process. *Mobilization Matters* are produced each month and will cover such topics as United Way Capacity for Mobilization, Mobilization Leadership, Mobilization Public Relations, Mediation Skills and other areas of interest.

The *Mobilization Matters* technical assistance briefs and additional resources are available on United Way Online at <https://online.unitedway.org>, under the Mobilization/Children link.

Feel free to reproduce these briefs and distribute them to your partners in the community. For technical assistance or suggested topics for future editions, please write to [mobilization@unitedway.org](mailto:mobilization@unitedway.org) or call toll-free: 1-800-UWA-2757, Ext. 428.

Thank you for all you are doing on behalf of children, youth and their families.



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