

Mobilization Matters

Outcome-Focused Planning for Community Mobilizations

Background

United Ways increasingly engage their communities to set a community-wide agenda for creating impact. Building effective plans that target community results and measure them is accomplished through Vision Councils, community partnerships, or other representative bodies. The components of mobilizing for community impact, including the community changes required to achieve outcomes for people, are shown in Table One, Framework for Community Impact.



Outcome-focused strategic planning addresses the challenges of defining, influencing, and measuring community-level results. United Way of America's "outcome-focused" planning process is different from other strategic planning processes because it starts by explicitly identifying the "end result"—the targeted benefits for people that the *Community Mobilization* aims to influence. It defines what community changes are needed to reach the desired outcome(s) and identifies how the *Community Mobilization* will create those changes. It develops a comprehensive plan for the coalition, complete with budget, timeframe, and work plan. Finally, participants build a measurement plan to document and report progress toward the targeted outcomes (see *Mobilization Matters: Community Impact Measurement*).

Introduction

This *Mobilization Matters* summarizes the planning process developed by United Way of America and used by Success By 6® and other United Way-led *Community Mobilizations*. [Note: The format of *Mobilization Matters* does not allow an in-depth description of this process. For more detailed information and training on outcome-focused planning, enroll in the United Way of America Learning Opportunities program, Achieving Community Outcomes: A Practical Approach or purchase *COMPASS II™: A Guide to Community Building*.]

Outcome-focused planning, as conducted by United Ways, has several valuable benefits:

- It is **participatory**. It engages multiple stakeholders in articulating a theory of how to create community impact and define a plan of action;
- By developing a good theory, the process creates **realistic expectations** for long-term outcomes, community changes, and strategies in light of existing and potential resources; and,
- This type of planning creates an environment for **reflection and dialogue**. Consensus building allows participants to freely challenge assumptions and "own" the plan.

The questions participants ask during outcome-focused planning bring these components to light in a thoughtful, thorough way, increasing the

defining, influencing, measuring



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mobilizing for community impact



chances that a *Community Mobilization* will target its efforts and resources on priority needs with the greatest chance of having impact.

There are also challenges associated with conducting an outcome-focused planning process. It is rigorous and requires time. Crafting workable solutions demands specific information about target populations, systems, institutions, organizations and other components of the community environment. The process also requires flexibility given that it is iterative and theories of change are refined as they are considered.

Heart of Florida United Way

Orlando, Florida

The partners in the local initiative have always considered a focus on outcomes to be a strength. It clearly helped the initiative gain the respect of potential partners in the community. The initiative was also able to secure additional financial support from a local foundation because of its focus on partnerships and results.

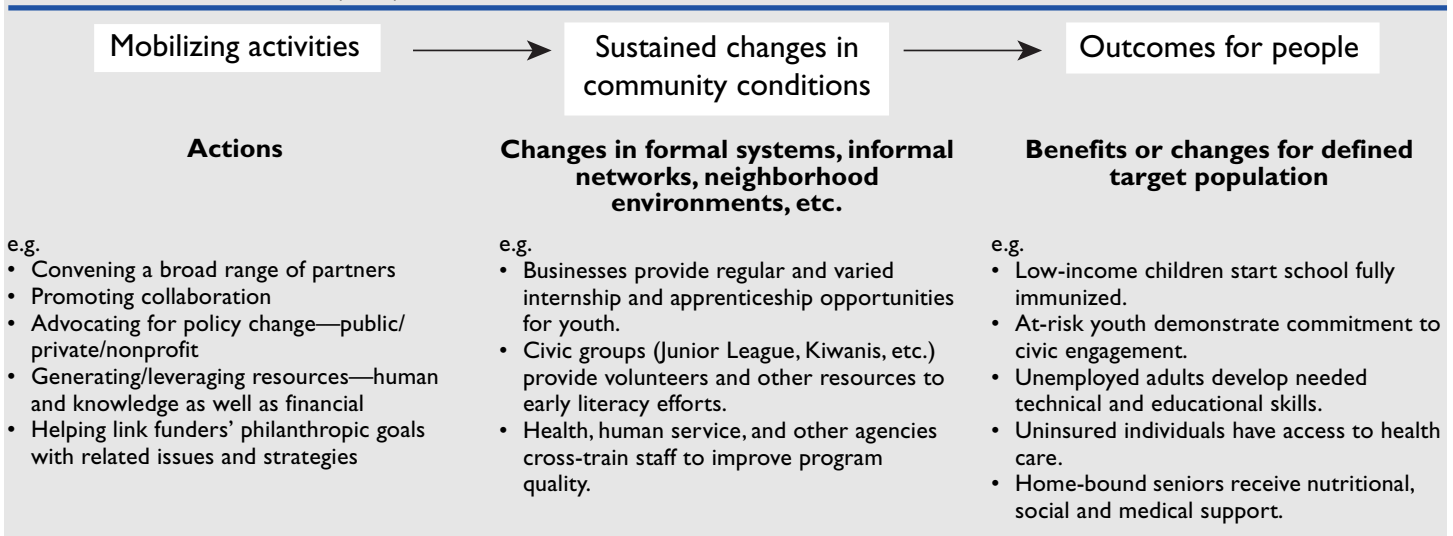
Guiding Principles of Outcome-Focused Planning

Outcome-focused planning participants build a comprehensive plan for community change by following these general principles:

- **Base decisions on substantiated facts.** Every phase of planning is supported by data and information (community-based, research-based or direct experiences) about systems, populations groups, organizations, families, and neighborhoods.
- **Do not rush to identify actions to be taken by the *Community Mobilization*.** Carefully focus on defining key leverage points, essential changes, and influences needed to bring about change before determining specific activities or tasks.
- **Aim to develop multiple, integrated strategies or approaches employed over three to five years, or longer.** To be successful at achieving the ambitious goal of changing the community environment to benefit targeted populations, it is necessary to build solutions that attack problems from different angles over long periods of time.
- **Consider more than just the health and human service sector in building strategies.** Addressing the many factors that influence priority community issues requires new approaches and new partners. Consequently, strategies should be about influencing whatever sectors, systems, networks, groups, or environments can play a role in improving lives in the community.

Table One

Framework for Community Impact



- **Describe intended outcomes, community changes and actions in specific terms.** Specificity helps build more effective strategies and increases the chances that measurement efforts will show results. You cannot develop a good theory about community impact if you are not sufficiently specific about what you are trying to accomplish and how.

United Way of Roanoke Valley

Roanoke, Virginia

The focus on outcomes helped keep the initiative teams mindful of their primary goals. Few, if any, partners or team members had difficulty staying on task with the identified outcomes. When they did become distracted, it was easy to remind them of the outcomes and what the initiative needed to do to achieve them. In addition, the focus on outcomes helped the initiative leverage additional financial resources from a funder that wanted to support projects making a significant impact. The initiative was able to demonstrate measurable results because of its outcome focus.

The Outcome-focused Planning Process

The **outcome-focused** planning process addresses eight basic questions:

1. What priority community issues should the *Community Mobilization* address? (see *Mobilization Matters: Assessing Your Community's Capacity for Community Mobilization: Data Gathering* and *Mobilization Matters: Assessing Your Community's Capacity for Community Mobilization: Identifying and Mapping Assets*).
2. What group of people does the *Community Mobilization* want to benefit and in what ways?
3. What barriers stand in the way?
4. What changes in organizations, systems, networks, etc. can remove or reduce the barriers?
5. Who/what can help?
6. What approach will the *Community Mobilization* take in bringing about these changes?
7. What are the necessary actions for each strategy and who will be responsible?

8. How will we know it is working? [Although developing the measurement plan is part of the outcome-focused planning process, this issue of *Mobilization Matters* does not address this topic. For information on building a measurement plan, see *Mobilization Matters: Community Impact Measurement*.]

Expect to cycle back several times to revise strategies. Although presented as a series of steps, outcome-focused planning is not a fixed or linear process. The duration of the planning process can vary. However, it is recommended that the process be completed within 11-12 months in order to sustain the synergy and commitment of the *Community Mobilization's* members and partners.

Once the *Community Mobilization* has built a shared vision that will guide its efforts, the outcome-focused planning begins by answering the eight planning process questions.

1. What priority community issues should the *Community Mobilization* address?

Choose a limited number (one or two are recommended) of priority issues that are critical in working toward achieving the community vision. Select issues based on criteria that help determine whether each issue is critical and whether the community has the will to address it.

Criteria include:

- Extent to which the issue relates to the community vision;
- Number of people affected by the issue;
- Cost to the affected individuals (e.g., loss of income, disability);
- Cost to the community (e.g., image, dollars, loss of industry);
- Community's likely ability to have an impact on the issue;
- Likely support from key constituencies to address the issue;
- Likelihood that the community can reach a consensus on a proposed solution; and,
- Whether the issue has been addressed by other efforts in the community.

United Way California Capital Region

Sacramento, California

The focus on outcomes was a stabilizing factor in the planning and implementation of the initiative and allowed the initiative partners to quickly agree on common ground. The planning process not only produced priority community outcomes, indicators, and measurement tools, but also cohesive relationships among initiative partners that have had an impact far beyond the Success By 6[®] focus.



Table Two

Sample Data on High School Graduation Rates

Issue	United Way Service Area	County	State	National
High School Graduation	Across all three counties in the United Way service area, 82% of students graduate from high school	Smith County: 91% Ellis County: 81% Salvo County: 58%	84%	87%

2. **What group of people does the *Community Mobilization* want to benefit and in what way(s)?**

Use data and information at the community, neighborhood, or other level, to identify the changes or benefits the *Community Mobilization* wants for a defined target population as a result of its work. Target populations may be defined by geographic location (e.g., residents of Eastside neighborhood), by demographic characteristics (e.g., Hispanic children), by relationship to an issue of concern (e.g., families who cannot afford to own homes), by a combination of these (e.g., recent immigrants who are unemployed), or in other ways.

For example, data gathered on high school graduation may show that there are disparities among communities in the United Way service area (see Table Two, Sample Data on High School Graduation Rates). Based on these data, a first draft of a longest term-outcome may be:

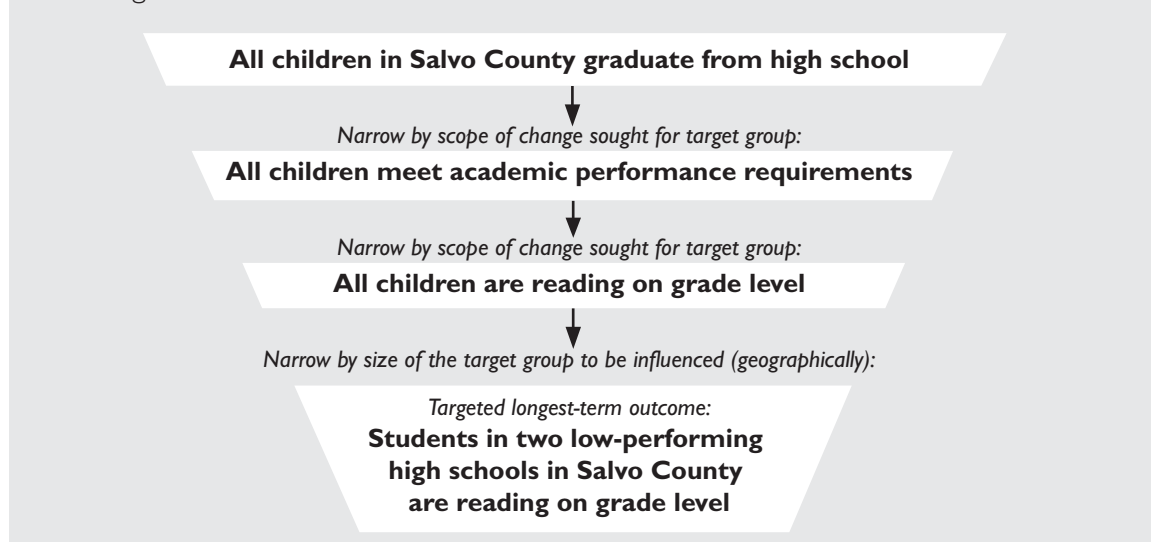
All children in Salvo County graduate from high school

Given that the aim is to have the greatest chance of demonstrating results, a useful longest-term outcome often focuses on significant components of an issue, rather than the entire topic. It also often targets specific populations. For example, high school graduation is a broad issue with many components—attendance rate, academic standing, mobility—involving perhaps thousands of children in a large community. Further, “all children” in the county are not in need of support to graduate from high school, so working to reach all children is not an efficient use of resources.

“All children in Salvo County graduate from high school” as a longest-term outcome is too large an undertaking, with accountability for all aspects of graduating all children in the county. The *Community Mobilization* will focus on narrowing the size of the target group and/or the scope of the intended influence so it can target a more plausible outcome (see Table Three, Narrowing an Outcome for Influence).

Table Three

Narrowing an Outcome for Influence





The more specific the *Community Mobilization* is about the targeted group of people it is aiming to benefit and the changes sought for that population, the more effective it can be in focusing its efforts to produce meaningful results (see Table Four, Example of Longest-term Outcomes).

3. What stands in the way?

Identify major barriers preventing the longest-term outcome from being true already. Specify the major problems to overcome in order for the target population to attain its outcome. At this level, responses often will be characteristics or circumstances of the target population or of informal networks (family, peer group, neighborhood, membership organization, voluntary association) surrounding that population.

Remember that it is easy to brainstorm a list of barriers to your longest-term outcomes. The challenge is identifying which of these are the primary factors in the local situation. Decisions should be based on fact, supported by research and the experience of those directly involved with the pertinent issues and relevant to the particular target group on which you are focusing.

4. What changes in organizations, systems, networks, etc. can address the barriers?

Specify the changes in actions/practices, allocation of resources, or other attributes of community systems, institutions, organizations, etc. that will remove or minimize the barriers (e.g., *The school district and public health department develop a shared database to track the immunizations of children entering school*). See Table Five for examples of how to identify community changes that address barriers to an outcome. Table Six shows sample community changes from the strategic plan of the United Way of Roanoke Valley's Success By 6[®] initiative.

Table Four

Example of Longest-Term Outcomes

- Hispanic children are enrolled in CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program).
- Low-income families who wish to own their own homes build savings and credit records to qualify for a mortgage.
- Recent immigrants who are unemployed acquire livable-wage jobs.

Table Five

Identifying Community Changes To Remove Barriers

Outcome:	Parents of Hispanic children ages 0-6 in the community know of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and how to enroll their children.
Barrier to outcome: Related community change:	Most materials about CHIP are only in English. The State Department of Health makes all materials describing CHIP available in Spanish.
Barrier to outcome: Related community change:	CHIP outreach workers are not fluent in Spanish and do not know how to fill out latest forms. State Department of Health employs bilingual outreach workers and provides training on most up-to-date enrollment procedures and forms.

Table Six

United Way of Roanoke Valley Success By 6[®] Strategic Plan (excerpt)

Targeted Outcome: Increase the availability of quality, affordable child care for working poor families with children under the age of six.

Strategy: Improve the Quality of Affordable Child Care

Community Changes

- The number of regulated child care providers that are accredited by national bodies will increase by 25 by the year 2005.
- The number of teachers with regulated child care providers who have Associate or Bachelor degrees in early childhood development will increase by 75 by the year 2005.
- The number of unregulated child care providers that become licensed, certified or voluntarily registered will increase.
- Formal linkages and agreements between child care providers and elementary schools will be developed to ensure smooth transition to Kindergarten for young children.
- Local models of improving the quality of child care that can be replicated and supported at the state level will be established.
- "Kith and kin" providers will be identified as "child care providers" and access to appropriate networks to support their efforts will be increased.

bringing about changes

As you identify barriers and the community changes to remove them, you begin to develop a theory of change or “roadmap to results.” When completed, this roadmap describes how the actions a Community Mobilization undertakes are intended to set in motion a series of changes, one leading to another, ultimately producing the benefits for community residents that the coalition has committed to achieve. The “roadmap to results” can be displayed as a logic model. Many United Way community impact staff are familiar with the use of a logic model for a health and human service strategy as described in United Way of America’s *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*. A logic model is also a useful tool in developing a strategy for community change. The visual depiction of various levels of outcomes and the relationships among them helps clarify the evolving strategy and communicate it to all involved.

5. Who/what can help?

Identify the community assets (such as individuals, groups, informal social networks, formal community systems, or other community resources) available to remove barriers and/or assist the target population to achieve the longest-term outcome. To do this, first determine the formal and informal affiliations that are relevant to the issue or strategy in the community. Look to non-traditional partners and those in the community with formal and informal influence. What role might they play in using their influence or assets to address the barriers identified? Next, identify the

formal and informal affiliations that are prominent in the lives of members of the target population (i.e., identify the target group’s trusted sources of influence). Then figure out the roles these might play in influencing the target population and minimizing the identified barriers.

For example, for enrolling children in health insurance, if the targeted group of people is strongly influenced by their churches and church leadership, then that community institution might be brought to bear to persuade church-going parents to enroll their young children in health insurance. A community change including this asset may be, “Church leaders in zip code area 11111 regularly communicate to their congregations about the value of enrolling their young children in health insurance.” Table Seven is an example of using assets to create community changes.

6. What approach will the *Community Mobilization* take in bringing about these changes?

Identify the approaches or strategies the *Community Mobilization* will take to build on community assets and influence systems, organizations and networks in the desired ways.

1. Strive to develop no- or low-cost alternatives (e.g., facilitate development of an agreement between the public health department and the school district to allow for transfer of immunization records).
2. Identify the key leverage points that will most likely bring about the intended community changes.
3. Investigate the specific division, unit, office, or individual responsible for making each system or institutional change you have identified.

Table Seven

Identifying Community Changes That Build on Community Assets

Outcome:	Parents of young Hispanic children ages 0-6 in the community know of the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and how to enroll their children.
Potential Asset: Related community change:	Local Hispanic radio station The local Hispanic radio station(s) airs PSAs and informational programming on CHIP.
Potential Asset: Related community change:	Hispanic faith-based groups Hispanic faith-based groups deliver messages on the importance of CHIP and how to enroll.



Strategies will interrelate so changes must be addressed from a variety of perspectives. The interrelation of strategies provides an opportunity for the coalition to involve increasing numbers and types of individuals and partners in helping address the issue.

Be sure you have the appropriate information to help you identify “avenues for influence”—ways to have an effect on actions/practices, allocation of resources, and other pertinent issues. This will enable the *Community Mobilization* to focus its efforts.

7. What are the necessary actions for each strategy and who will be responsible?

Specify the tasks required to set the strategy in motion and designate who is responsible for these tasks, by when, and with what other partners. Table Eight is a sample of actions to achieve the community change, “Gun-free, drug-free zones will be established within 1000 feet of each city park to allow for stricter law enforcement sanctions.” This community change is part of a strategy to provide stricter and harsher punishment for violating drug and gun laws.

The collective actions and tasks needed to achieve each targeted community change comprise the action plan for the coalition.

Conclusion

The *outcome-focused* planning process carefully examines the facts about complex community problems to produce a comprehensive community impact plan that describes:

- The changes for a defined group of people the *Community Mobilization* intends to achieve;
- How it will go about achieving those changes;
- How it will measure success and track its progress; and,
- The resources needed.



United Ways that have adopted this process report that it produces a focused and effective roadmap for bringing about community impact—sustained changes in community conditions that improve the lives of people.

Heart of Georgia United Way

Dublin, Georgia

The focus on outcomes had a tremendous effect on the initiative and its partners. Many of the partners were able to understand clearly the benefit of the collaboration and coordination of effort. They were able to see the relationship between their projects and the overall outcome of healthy and developmentally prepared children. It helped keep many of them at the table. In addition, their ability to communicate the plan succinctly brought new partners to the table.

Table Eight

Sample Actions Related to a Targeted Community Change

Intended Community Change: *The Homer City Council will establish gun-free, drug-free zones within 1000 feet of each city park to allow for stricter law enforcement sanctions.*

Actual Community Change: *On November 16, 2002 the Homer City Council adopted a city ordinance creating a drug and gun-free zone within 1000 of all city parks.*

Sample Actions:

- Research the gun/drug positions of each City Council member.
- Research and identify other organizations who would help sponsor an ordinance.
- Schedule and meet with each potential partnering sponsor organization.
- Meet with each City Council member.
- Obtain data related to gun/drug arrests within 1000 feet of city parks over the past 5 years.
- Meet with City Attorney to help draft ordinance.
- Meet with Editorial Board of newspaper for an endorsement of the proposed ordinance.
- Reach agreement with victims of drug and gun violence to appear/testify before the City Council.
- Schedule a presentation on the City Council Agenda.
- Etc.

improving
lives

mobilization matters

The following sources were utilized in developing this document:

COMPASS II™: Guide to Community Building.
United Way of America.

Achieving Community Outcomes: A Practical Approach. United Way of America Learning Opportunity.

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). Our focus is on developing an outcome-focused plan for community collaboration.

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 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.

Feel free to reproduce these briefs and distribute them to your partners in the community.



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