

Mobilization Matters

Community Mobilization Guiding Principles

mobilizing resources and expertise

Never underestimate the focused power of a few! Convening multi-sector coalitions to form public/private partnerships is not new. Increasingly, stakeholders are working together to assess community needs, map the community's assets, plan and coordinate the delivery of community resources to solve local problems and then evaluate their efforts. Communities that are mobilizing resources and expertise are rebuilding healthy American communities that share a common vision, purpose and work collaboratively to address problems.



The number of community-based coalitions in the U.S. is in the thousands and has grown exponentially over the past decade. Over 4,000 coalitions are working to prevent substance abuse.¹ Over 2,000 coalitions are focused on prevention of crime at the local level.² Within the United Way network, more than 400 United Way-led coalitions—called initiatives within the United Way system—are working to build community and focus on children, young people and their families. Initiatives can:

- Enable organizations to become involved in new and broader issues without having the sole responsibility for managing or developing responses.
- Demonstrate and develop widespread public support for issues, actions or unmet community needs. This can help create the political will to make hard choices.
- Maximize the power of individuals and groups through joint action; coalitions can increase the critical mass behind a community effort by helping individuals achieve objectives beyond the scope of any one individual or organization.
- Minimize the duplication of effort and services. This economy of scale can be a positive side effect of improved trust and communication among groups that would normally compete with one another.
- Help mobilize more talent, resources and approaches to influence an issue than any single organization could achieve alone. Coalitions are “strategic devices” which enhance the leverage that groups can amass.
- Provide an avenue for recruiting participants from diverse constituencies, such as political, business, human service, social and religious groups, and less organized grassroots groups and individuals.
- Exploit new resources in changing situations.³

Community Mobilization Guiding Principles is based upon the direct experience of United Way initiatives, coalition research and writings. The Principles have been developed based on technical assistance discussions individually with United Ways and United Way of America staff as well as synopses of meetings with United Way Community Impact Vice Presidents, Success By 6[®] and Bridges To Success[®] grantees.



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Mobilization for
America's Children
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¹ Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. 2001.

² National Crime Prevention Council. 2001.

³ *Understanding Coalitions and How They Operate: An “Open Systems” Organizational Perspective.* Abraham Wandersman. A summary of literature prepared for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community-Based Public Health Initiative. April 1993. Page 4.

beginning with a catalyst

“United Way is seen as a community builder and problem-solver now, not just a fund distributor.”

Community Mobilization Guiding Principles

Mobilization of any kind begins with a catalyst. The catalyst can be a person or an event. In some communities, the needs of young people have become the focus of highly visible meetings or conferences. Town meetings have proven to be an invaluable tool in some locales. In other communities, a tragedy brings multiple stakeholders in the community together to grieve, and to plan a community response. The mobilization process may begin with a couple of citizens conversing at a restaurant or in an office. Or it may begin with a local United Way responding to a needs assessment or asset mapping project or with a single person who wants to improve the community’s response to the needs of children, young people and their families.

Community mobilization is a process of dialogue among members of the community to determine who, what, and how issues are decided and addressed. Community mobilizations provide an avenue for everyone to participate in decisions and actions that affect their lives, and the lives of others. Successful community mobilization efforts promote and implement integrated efforts to achieve community impact, measure the impact and communicate the impact in order to develop long-term positive outcomes for selected populations or geographic areas.

1. Recruit and maintain the right leadership

Successful community mobilizations identify a formal leader who has name recognition, credibility, passion, and a reputation for getting things done. Prior knowledge about the mobilization’s focus area is a plus, but is not required. The formal leader should be in a position of power (i.e., serve on the board of directors) with United Way or other convening organization.

Leadership must be effective in brokering and building bridges among those involved in planning, and implementing the mobilization work. In addition, leaders must be able to make commitments of time and money to support the mobilization’s mission. In order to gain access to powerbrokers, key influential

community leaders must respect both staff and volunteer leadership. Also, the leadership should have the respect of disenfranchised groups, communities, and minorities.

The **United Way Thomas Jefferson Area** in Charlottesville, Virginia’s Success By 6 is chaired by the Senior Vice President of Bank of America in Charlottesville.

2. Leadership is Dispersed

All volunteer and staff leaders of the mobilization should be the first among equals. Otherwise, departure of a key player may result in drastically reduced levels of community engagement, community impact and credibility. Mobilizations should not become overly dependent upon paid staff to set the direction or broker key relationships. All leadership, both staff and volunteer, should be skilled at building and maintaining relationships, and at building bridges to foster collaborative work towards a shared vision. Dispersed leadership is also essential in order to minimize lost productivity and credibility in times of leadership transition.

The **United Way of Greenville County’s Success By 6** leadership includes the Superintendent of Schools for Greenville County, the County Administrator, the City Manager, the former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education and a representative from the South Carolina Department of Education.

3. Staff and Volunteers Reflect the Diversity of the Community

People of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicity should be actively recruited to the mobilization. Successful initiatives embrace diversity and inclusiveness. Such initiatives encourage members to: (1) learn about and include members of diverse cultures, (2) overcome common misperceptions, and (3) create a culture that is inviting to all. United Way and other conveners should model and teach members to value diversity in order to improve the initiative’s effectiveness.



The **United Way in Kennewick, Washington** is building relations with the Latino and Hispanic populations through organizations such as the Hispanic Outreach Leadership Alliance (HOLA) and La Clinica, a local community health clinic.

4. Include People of Influence

A comprehensive mobilization requires a variety of partners since no one entity can accomplish outcomes alone. Mobilizations are more likely to be successful when business and other community partners bring their expertise and resources to the table to help develop systemic change. It is essential to include the leaders or decision-makers representing key constituencies. Such influential stakeholders are important since they are well positioned to alleviate resistance, and overcome barriers to mobilization efforts. Also, regular attendance by influential stakeholders at mobilization meetings will strengthen the perception by other participants that mobilizing is a priority. Key representation may include the chief of police, the director of health, the superintendent of schools, etc. Other key stakeholders, such as the Mayor or President of the local Chamber of Commerce, can help facilitate the achievement of impact on systems, i.e., changes in policies, practices and procedures that are desired by the mobilization. To maximize the input and “buy-in” of such leadership, the mobilization leadership should encourage attendance of the key decision-makers representing various parts of the community at all crucial meetings.

In **Richmond, Virginia, Success By 6** is chaired by an executive of a Fortune 500 medical supply company who is a leader with prior involvement in children’s issues.

5. Involve People, in the Heart of the Dialogue, Who are Directly Affected By Policies and Systems

It is vital that mobilizations include those people who are most affected by the issue(s) or within the geographic area or population being targeted. Informal leadership must also be represented, including people of great integrity, experience, and influence who are not “in front of the cameras” on a regular basis. For example, if the mobilization is designed to promote

changes in after-school opportunities, a grandmother who gives cookies to children, and teaches them about gardening in an effort to improve the safety of their environment, should be involved. To learn who these informal leaders are, simply ask people who live in the neighborhood.

The **Nashville, Tennessee Success By 6** planned one strategy, only to find that the residents of the targeted neighborhood perceived needs differently. A Family Resource Center was developed as a result of the resident-led decision making process.

6. Enable Stakeholders to Make Decisions

Community mobilization initiatives must include diverse stakeholders equitably in order to succeed, so all stakeholders must be actively involved in the decision-making process, rather than merely serving as advisors. Momentum will be lost if stakeholders perceive their participation as mere window-dressing while a group of staff, a politician or other leadership group makes the “really important” decisions. A community will work more effectively toward accomplishing goals if everyone who is involved in a consensus-building process agrees with the vision, mission, strategies and action plan.



United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania Middle School Success Initiative

United Way, leading an initiative targeting six middle schools throughout the Lehigh Valley, facilitated the formation of School Success Teams that include school, parent, student, United Way and community representatives. In their leadership role, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley convenes and facilitates multi-sector funders and decision-makers to integrate the work on seven targeted community outcomes for children and teens. Each School Success Team develops an integrated continuum of strategies including, among others: building assets in all students, maximizing parental involvement, increasing student voice and leadership, and providing “wrap around” interventions, when needed.

United Way of the Bay Area, San Francisco, California

Foster Care Initiative

The San Francisco Foster Care Initiative is a public/private collaborative whose mission is to empower young people ages 16 to 21 years old to transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. United Way of the Bay Area took the lead to convene various funders and direct service providers to focus on three major areas: Education, Housing, and Jobs at livable wages. To support youth during this challenging transition, SFFCI provides case management, life skills, financial management training and mental health services. The initiative also works with local and state policy makers to identify solutions to the obstacles that young people face as they exit foster care. Only in its infancy, the initiative is working with HUD, Department of Human Services, Community Mental Health, investors in Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and others.

7. Build on Community Strengths and Assets

Everyone remembers the age-old question regarding how to describe a glass that is filled with water to its mid-point. Is it half full or half empty? Community mobilizations should be built upon the strengths of each member, because the power of the group is embodied in the sum of the individual capacities. On the other hand, social scientists build a world based upon the emptiness of the individual, a model that is based upon weakness.

In the guidebook, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, McKnight and Kretzmann suggest that communities cannot be rebuilt by focusing on their needs, problems, and deficiencies. Rather, community building starts with the process of identifying and capitalizing on the assets, skills, and capacities of residents, citizens' associations, and local institutions. Communities depend upon current institutional and human capacities. Mobilizations build upon those capacities and influence the systems that can modify known deficiencies.

8. Leaders and Partners Must Think in New Ways

The old ways of doing business may not apply to community mobilization. Existing funding mechanisms may not work, and new ones may need to be cultivated. Instead of an “us-them” mentality, United Way and other mobilization conveners must adopt “we” as the primary mechanism for getting things done. United Way’s existing relationship with other organizations (especially nontraditional partners) that play a role in this process may need to change. A balance of power in relationships is needed in order to move forward with collaborative planning and action.

United Way of Genesee County, Flint, Michigan

Bridges to Success

Since 1998, via leadership in Bridges to Success, United Way of Genesee County in Flint, Michigan has worked directly with schools in 21st Century afterschool efforts. Bridges to Success has served as a model that other school districts can use to support youth development, parental involvement, and coordinated human service delivery. To this end, collaborative efforts were forged among three school districts at the elementary and middle school levels.

The collaborative effort led by United Way has recently 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 for countywide development of afterschool programming. The grant of approximately \$2.9 million was approved.



building on
strengths

9. Strategies Should Balance Long-term With Short-term, Big and Small

From the beginning, a mobilization initiative needs to consider how to build for the long-term. There are pressures to take immediate short-term actions that will yield short-term results, but the initiative must consider sustainability if it wants to measurably impact the community in the long run. Early on, steps to build longevity should include: (1) identifying emerging leaders in the community, (2) creating a public image that will endure, and (3) securing long-term commitments from partners. The issues faced by communities have taken generations to develop. Similarly, planning and implementing solutions will take a persistent effort over a number of years. When starting “with the end in mind,” mobilizations set targeted long-term outcomes for selected

United Way Services in Richmond, Virginia Success By 6

Success By 6 modeled their work after a proven best practice. Through research, staff selected a highly effective best practice for increasing immunization rates called the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Linkage.

Pioneered in Chicago by the Centers for Disease Control, the practice involves linking WIC vouchers (which are redeemable for food and child-related supplies) with immunizations. Parents enrolled in WIC who keep their children fully immunized are only required to come to the agency quarterly to pick up their WIC vouchers. Parents who don't stay current are required to come in monthly. Success By 6 focused on three key high-leverage points:

- 1) Obtaining funds to cover the cost of health department staff working with parents enrolled in WIC
- 2) Working collaboratively on-site with overworked frontline nurse supervisors
- 3) Building relationships of greater trust and communication with health department leaders at the city and state levels.

Between May 1999 and August 2000, immunization rates for children enrolled in WIC rose from 26% to an astounding 94% for the city.

populations or geographic areas. These outcomes will not be realized in the short-term. Long-term outcomes for larger groups of individuals will only be achievable if your mobilization works on multiple strategies and at the public policy level. This work at the “top” will lead to changes that broadly alter the way a community, and its institutions do business. Altering the social services systems, for example, may result in more flexible funding or more responsive regulations. Such small, early successes are needed in order to establish credibility and to leverage support. Some short-term, positive outcomes for certain individuals or sub-populations may occur as a result of implementation at the service delivery level, and at the neighborhood level.

Successful initiatives ensure that action invested at one end of the spectrum produces the desired changes at the other end. Feedback and decision-making by the residents will help you shape your access and advocacy strategies. Effective work with policy-makers, and service system leaders should lead to improved strategies, and better outcomes for neighborhood residents. You should strive to achieve a balance between top-down and bottom-up strategies, and to ensure that each sector involved in the mobilization understands the interdependent nature of the initiative's partners.

10. Use Data as a Source of Power and Leverage for Planning and Change

Mobilization leadership builds power by gathering information about the important concerns of key stakeholders, agency/organizational officials, grassroots groups, and special populations. Information that is not widely available to others in the community becomes very important to achieving positive community impact. Mobilization leadership exercises this power by serving as the conduit for information, and valued resources, among all those participating in the mobilization or who are impacted by mobilization efforts.

United Way of Lane County in Springfield, Oregon based initiative work on data. In 1999 when a child died from maltreatment despite the fact that the abuse had been reported and services had been provided, UWLC responded by launching a Success By 6 initiative. Data showed that from 1998 to 1999 the number of confirmed child abuse cases in the county jumped from 689 to 1080, a 64 percent increase in just one year's time.

planning and
change

“Success By 6 has brought expansive media coverage to United Way.”

assessing progress

*new funding,
resources or
partnerships*

“All children are ready to succeed when they enter school”

—Success By 6

11. Build Shared Vision, Ownership, and Passion

A vision is a statement or image of how an initiative’s success will alter current reality. A vision is your idea of how you want the community or a part of the community to appear when the mobilization efforts succeed. Many great visions have emerged from discussions that begin with asking everyone to pretend to wave a magic wand, then describe a beautiful dream they have for children, youth, families, or neighborhoods over the next 5, 10 or 25 years.

A jointly developed vision is the first step toward shared ownership, the foundation of collaboration, and the heart and soul of every initiative. When United Way or other convener is passionate about the issues they have targeted for change, shared vision and ownership will follow. Both staff and volunteer leadership need to have the ability to communicate the needs of the targeted constituency with clarity and with passion. Passion cannot be replicated from one person or community to another; it must be inspired. The passion from leaders may bring and keep people at the table, but it will be their passion that moves them into action.

The initiative will have opportunities to leverage resources for implementation from other organizations, donors and partners. Every partner can contribute in some way through the provision of staff, funding or in-kind services, such as research, media, space, refreshments, office space, computer time, etc. Resources also include phone calls made on behalf of the initiative, letters written or meetings held; in a word, influence. The collaboration will attract funding opportunities as an initiative, rather than as an individual program, and may use existing resources to attract new funding, resources or partnerships.

United Way of Greater High Point in North Carolina has raised money for Bridges to Success and Success By 6 from various sources. Since its founding, Success By 6 has raised \$2 million in private dollars and leveraged another \$912,000 in grants. In 1999, 2000, and again in 2001, United Way received Bank of America grants for Success By 6 totaling \$460,000 altogether. Bridges to Success, begun with \$200,000 in start-up money from the Wallace Funds, has received \$125,000 in the second round of Wallace funding in 2001 and has leveraged an additional \$186,000 in grants and in-kind funding.

The United Way of the Plains, Wichita/Sedgwick County, Kansas Project Access

The United Way in Wichita, Kansas met with the local medical society and local leaders to develop a plan to increase health care access to the uninsured. Called Project Access, this effort has enrolled over 1700 patients, with over 500 physicians and six area hospitals providing pro bono care since 1999. The value of free care being provided is more than \$7 million dollars annually. “For an investment of \$180,000, we have helped leverage more than \$7 million in donated physician and hospital care for the working poor without health insurance.”

—Patrick J. Hanrahan, President, United Way of the Plains, Wichita, Kansas

12. Funding is Broad-Based

Community mobilization initiatives require ongoing financial support. In order to secure the resources necessary to sustain and nurture your work, you should first identify your requirements, and then seek possible sources of funding, as well as other types of resources. To avoid being overly dependent on a single source of funding or other type of resource, focus on developing support from a variety of sources.

13. Assess Process and Progress Regularly

In order to sustain an effective initiative, it is essential that the process be reviewed on an ongoing basis. The initiative may be derailed and lose momentum unless you routinely ask, “How well is the initiative working?” It is imperative to establish a formal tracking and monitoring plan. A regular survey of your partnership can be implemented easily and should include the following questions:

How do the partners feel about their personal involvement in the initiative? Are their opinions valued? Is their expertise utilized? Is their role clear?

How do partners feel about the progress of the initiative? Is the initiative making a difference? Are conditions improving for children as a result of the initiative?

How do partners feel about the process? Is the planning effort logical? Are the right people at the table? Is communication timely and accurate? Are decisions made fairly?

In addition to asking the questions, the initiative will need a response mechanism. Concerns will need to be reported back to the partnership along with recommended solutions. Whenever possible, partners who have expressed the concern should be included in the discussions of potential solutions.

14. Measure and Report Results (Outcome Measurement)

Creating change takes place over several years. Evaluation, integrated into implementation, ensures that the mobilization is constantly aware of its progress toward achieving impact that has positive benefits for the community. Indicators of success (i.e., benchmarks) inform the mobilization leadership of the status of progress toward achieving specific results or outcomes. Marking achievements along the way helps you to maintain the momentum necessary for success. Also, any investment of resources will be driven by the outcomes that the investment leverages. Successful mobilizations should include staff and/or volunteers with specific outcome measurement and evaluation expertise.

15. Celebrate Outcomes and Progress Toward Outcomes

Celebrations recognize the achievements of the collaborative, and yield partners with renewed energy and enthusiasm for the partnership. Some celebrations will be small and only include key partners; others will warrant inviting the entire collaborative or the targeted community. Celebrations, either private or public, allow collaborators, and staff to take time to recognize their achievements, use their successes to make a statement to the community, reflect on the path to the present status, and ponder future challenges they may face in creating a community that is pro-family.

“The initiative is changing the United Way image from remediation to prevention.”

United Way of Greater Greensboro, North Carolina and United Way of Greater High Point, North Carolina Bridges to Success

In 1998, United Way of Greater Greensboro in partnership with the United Way of Greater High Point received a \$400,00 grant to create a strategy to ensure that economically disadvantaged children in their community have access to community supports and services that contribute to educational success. This strategy, known as Bridges to Success, was piloted in two of the poorest neighborhoods and lowest performing schools in the county. Over a three- year period, several programs were offered to students and their parents, including tutoring, computer clubs, art clubs, and mentoring. Additionally, a Family Resource Center, which offered computer skills development to all family members, was created at one school and a Family Wellness Center at another.

As a result of these supports, early signs of success were documented.

Targeted Long-Term Outcome: Improved test scores

Student test scores increased by 8.5% on the state standardized test

Targeted Long-Term Outcome: Increased parental involvement

PTA membership grew from 19 in 1997 to 160 during the 2000/01 school year

New relationships among schools and community institutions were formed including the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra, a local food chain and the University of North Carolina (at Greensboro). The initiative has also leveraged over \$1 million in local resources to support, expand and sustain Bridges to Success.

United Way of San Antonio and Bexar, San Antonio, Texas Success By 6

The Success By 6 initiative focused on enrolling children in CHIP since the Texas Legislature meets every 2 years; no children in the state had been enrolled. The Legislature was ready to pass CHIP at 150% of the poverty level, but thanks to the advocacy done by Success By 6 and Bank of America executives in Texas, the Legislature passed CHIP at 200% of the poverty level. Legislation was also passed to simplify the Medicaid application for children and re-enrollment procedures-affecting over 60,000 children in Bexar County alone.

celebrating
outcomes



mobilization matters

The following 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.

Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, written by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight; ACTA Publications. Call 800-397-2282 to order a copy.

Experiential Lessons on Community Coalitions for Preventing Substance Abuse, written by Barbara Bradley, and James E. Copple, in collaboration with Stephen Fawcett, Adrienne Paine-Andrews, Rhonda Lewis, Ella Williams, Vincent Francisco, and Kimber Richter. Published by The Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. 1993.

Family and Work Institute: Community Mobilization Forums found online at www.familiesandwork.org.

Together We Can is a guide to creating an interagency system of education and human services published as a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It was written by Atelia I. Melaville, of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, and Martin J. Blank, of the Institute for Educational Leadership; with Gelareh Asayesh. Call 800-872-5327 to order a copy.

Understanding Coalitions and How They Operate: An "Open Systems" Organizational Perspective. Abraham Wandersman. A summary of literature prepared for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community-Based Public Health Initiative. April 1993. Page 4.

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 around those accessing these age groups.

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.

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 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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