

Assessing Your Community's Capacity for Mobilization: Data Gathering

defining the climate

Introduction

Some United Way initiatives find initial data gathering very cumbersome. This *Mobilization Matters* has been designed by the Mobilization for America's Children at United Way of America to help United Ways collect data through simple interviews and by using existing data sources. Essential data gathering to prepare for any mobilization effort includes:

- Defining the community's political climate;
- Collecting existing baseline statistics on "problems" facing citizens;
- Interviewing stakeholders to identify their specific interests and priorities; and,
- Speaking to the public at-large about their specific interests and priorities.



A subsequent *Mobilization Matters: Assessing Your Community's Capacity: Identifying and Mapping Assets*, discusses how United Ways can identify the assets within their community. An inventory of assets, when combined with data gathering, presents a more complete picture of your community. Assets can be identified through:

- Surveys of key stakeholder organizations, including non-profit organizations, labor organizations, businesses and others.

Mobilizations, to be effective and credible, must have an intimate knowledge of the capacity of the community to come together toward a common vision. This capacity is the sum of: 1) an adequate understanding of challenges facing targeted populations/geographic areas; 2) available social and human capital; 3) available community institutions, services; and, 4) the local systems that are in place.

This *Mobilization Matters* is based on the *COMPASS II: A Guide to Community Building* pilot work done by numerous United Ways.¹ The processes described herein are also based on extensive discussions with Success By 6[®] and Bridges To Success[®] initiatives experienced in data-based decision making and implementation.

Getting Started

As a rule, a United Way initiates a Community Mobilization following extensive discussions and an indication of interest from several influential members of the community. United Way must then establish and reach agreement with a broad sampling of the community that a coalition is both needed and desirable. The United Way's existing working relationships



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¹ Among those United Ways who provided input into the sample data gathering processes outlined in COMPASS II are: Fort Collins Area United Way, Fort Collins, Colorado; United Way of Central Indiana, Indianapolis, Indiana; United Way of Erie County, Erie, Pennsylvania; United Way of the LaCrosse Area, LaCrosse, Wisconsin; United Way of Loveland-Berthoud-Estes Park, Loveland, Colorado; United Way of Metropolitan Tarrant County, Fort Worth, Texas; United Way of Northeast Louisiana, Monroe, Louisiana; United Way of Somerset County, Somerville, New Jersey; and United Way of Sonoma-Mendocino-Lake, Santa Rosa, California.

getting started

within the community may have led to past or current discussion of local “problems.” Those with whom the United Way has been having informal discussions may constitute an informal pre-implementation Steering Committee. Keep in mind that United Way does not “own” the initiative—the community does. United Way facilitates the community’s “plan” and process.

A pre-implementation Steering Committee does many things including:

- Providing oversight and direction to the coalition-building process and helping to broaden “membership” of the mobilization effort.

United Way of Metropolitan Nashville Nashville, Tennessee

In 1991, the United Way Success By 6 was co-led by two United Way volunteers, both influential community leaders in the field of health care. They were determined to bring to the table both corporate sector leadership and experts in children’s issues. These two invited thirty Chief Executive Officers to join the Success By 6 Council, and simultaneously formed the Success By 6 Partners, comprised of early childhood specialists and service providers.

vision, mission,
strategies and
action plan

- Helping develop a community assessment and an asset map of the community.
- Helping research and select community indicators.
- Developing initial vision and mission statements.
- Developing and overseeing an outcome-focused strategic planning process, a work plan and measurement plan.
- Beginning budgeting and fundraising.
- Beginning public relations, and an outreach and communications strategy.
- Making decisions regarding linkage to the United Way Governing Board and organizational structure for start-up.
- Developing a fundraising/development plan.
- Developing a plan for leadership transition.

Step One: Determine the Community’s Political Climate
The inaugural pre-implementation Steering Committee might use a checklist similar to the one in Table One to assess the external-to-United Way environment and jump-start thinking.

Step Two: Collect Baseline Data
Baseline data will be used in several ways. First, data will either validate or invalidate the focus you’ve chosen for the mobilization. For example, if your intent is to focus on impacting

Table One

The Political Climate vis-a-vis Mobilization

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. Are most of the needed resources in place locally—is it more a matter of creating the “public will”?		
4. Are existing community sectors and institutions tiring of the old ways of doing business together?		
5. Is there an increasing knowledge that what has been done in the past simply is not working?		
6. Are the community “powerbrokers” accessible?(i.e., does a newly elected Mayor need his/her own issue?)		

the health outcomes for the elderly population but the data indicate current services, systems and policies are meeting the need; you will want to reconsider that focus. Likewise, if your focus relates to the health of young children and the data support that direction, you will be in a position to use those baseline data in recruiting partners, launching a planning process, and later in evaluating and communicating community impact.

Collect both objective data (statistics) and subjective data (the experience and perceptions of informed local residents). *Use existing data whenever possible.* Where can baseline data be found? A worksheet can be developed based on the focus of your mobilization. Table Two (page 4) is an example of such a worksheet.

Collect perceptions and subjective analyses through town meetings, group dialogue and other means. Involve people who have a stake in the data (i.e., people who live in affected neighborhoods). If adequate data are not available, consider surveys as a collection tool. Surveys can be expensive and extremely time consuming, so whenever possible, use existing data (two sample surveys to explore the opinions of stakeholders are found in *COMPASS II: Guide to Community Building*).



United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (UWSEPA) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

For their early childhood initiative, UWSEPA first spoke to over 300 parents, providers and key community leaders for their knowledge and insight. Administrative and other databases were studied. UWSEPA then commissioned some original research. One study, the Philadelphia 1000 Family Survey, was a random representative survey of 1000 Philadelphia families with young children ages birth to five. The survey was designed to find out current use of early care and education, health care, and parenting education and support services, and to learn more about what parents want and need for their young children.

The second survey, the Philadelphia Child Care Quality Study, surveyed the quality at 208 early care and education settings representing the range of Philadelphia's child care programs. The study included informal care provided by relatives or neighbors as well as formal center-based and Head Start programs.

United Way of Lane County Springfield, Oregon

In Lane County, timber industry jobs that had provided good wages and benefits disappeared in the mid-1980's. As the social fabric strained, substance abuse and teen pregnancies rose dramatically, and child abuse skyrocketed.

In 1999, when a child died from maltreatment—despite the fact that the abuse had been reported and services had been provided—United Way of Lane County (UWLC) responded by launching a Success By 6® initiative. The Leadership Team was comprised of United Way volunteers and business leaders who could leverage resources for the effort.

Data showed that from 1998 to 1999 the number of confirmed child abuse cases in the county jumped from 689 to 1080, a 64% increase in just one year. With substance abuse reaching crisis proportions, the majority of limited available resources were being used on substance abuse treatment.

Success By 6 in Lane County is changing community norms and transforming systems of service. Success By 6 leaders are focusing their efforts on educating the public on how crucial the early childhood years are. They have taken inspiration from the national campaign of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, which has produced a remarkable cultural shift in making once acceptable behaviors taboo.

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

Table Two

Sample Data Collection Worksheet

Data Source	Relevant Source (Y/N)	Potential data from this source	Existing contact with data source	Strategy for securing data	Cost to obtain data	Person(s) Responsible
Census 2000	Y	Number of elderly by neighborhood, income & housing	Data is on internet	Search web	free	V.P. Community Initiatives
Chamber of Commerce	Y	Raw data on elderly population from "Quality of Life Survey"	Y	Meet with Chamber President		UW Board Chair
Local Realtors' Association						
Chamber of Commerce						
United Way Community Assessment						
United Way Asset Mapping						
COMPASS II						
Local Public School System(s)						
Local Public Health Department(s)						
Public Social Services Department						
Area Council on Aging						
City/County Planning Departments						
Kid's Count						
State Department of Human Services						
State Department of Education						
State Department of Mental Health						
Local Non-Profits						
Local Hospitals						
Labor Organizations						
Retailers						
Resident associations						
Local Universities						
Law Enforcement						
Public Relations and Marketing firms						
Insurance Companies						
Other						



Once you have compiled data from sources relevant to the focus of your Community Mobilization, it is important to create a one-page document of the data highlights. The data overview will help you begin discussions when you conduct Stakeholder Assessments. In the fictitious example that follows, the county and state health departments collected the data. As you can see, the data clearly indicate a specific health disparity among a specific population in a specific geographic area. Specifics will be invaluable to your efforts. Here is an example.

Health Issue	Service Area	Demographic/ Geographic	State	National
Infant Mortality	Salvo County: 5.8 per 1,000 live births	White: 4.3 African-American: 9.4 per 1,000 live births	Florida: 7.2 (rate) per 1,000 live births	U.S.A.: 7.3 (rate) per 1,000 live births <small>*100% Access/Zero Health Disparities Developers' Guide, 2001.</small>

*The data highlights should identify **where** and **what** “problems” exist for **whom**.* See Table Three for another example.

Now it is time to include people with credibility and clout within the public and private sectors to carry discussions to the next level. How do you broaden involvement and perspective at this stage?

United Way of Central Carolinas, Inc. Charlotte, North Carolina

United Way concluded they would focus on prevention-oriented work: (1) dealing with children early in life; (2) with the family; and, (3) with the environment in which the child and family live. At the same time, the Council for Children and other United Way member agencies had been discussing ways in which they could be more effective with children. The discussions led to points of agreement and an early childhood initiative was born. Lynn Otzman says, “Successful initiatives start like this; they build on existing conversations about child well being in the community. The initiative is welcomed as a vehicle for addressing concerns that people already ‘own’. Success By 6® in Charlotte has been perceived as a continuation of these discussions, but with United Way “taking the lead”.

Step Three: Conduct a Stakeholder Assessment
The three-fold purpose of a Stakeholder Assessment is to:

- 1) Expand relationships with non-traditional partners, specifically, government, neighborhood groups, and local residents as consumers of the services United Way traditionally funds. Community and system-wide change requires involvement at every level.
- 2) Determine which individuals, organizations, and/or associations may be interested in mutually beneficial problem solving within your community.
- 3) Begin to engage potential stakeholders in the Asset Mapping process.

The Stakeholder Assessment begins with identification of:

- Existing contacts in the stakeholder group. Develop a list of the close professional/personal relationships United Way has in place with multiple community organizations, businesses, neighborhoods, etc.
- Potential stakeholders from each sector of the community, both “formal and

interviewing stakeholders

“Successful initiatives... build on existing conversations...”

Table Three

United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (UWSEPA)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Example One-Page Early Childhood Data Overview

Health Care

Availability

Number of Sites

- (3) children's hospitals
- (26) hospitals with primary pediatric practices
- (15) federally-funded health centers
- (11) nursing centers
- (9) hospitals with prenatal care
- (8) city health centers

Behavioral Health

(1629) children 0-5 receive behavioral health services through the Medicaid Program

Early Intervention for Children w/ Severe Developmental Delay

(4400) young children are participating in early intervention services
(1600) are birth-3 years, receiving services from (30) providers
(2800) are 3-5 years, receiving services from (16) providers

Key Findings from Original Research Commissioned

96% of families report that their young children have a regular source of health care
35% of families of 3 and 4 year olds report that their children have never seen a dentist

Quality

(12) of (15) HMO's meet high voluntary standards of accreditation
16% of children screened have lead poisoning
11% of parents report that their young children have asthma

Accessibility

(73,000) children under age 5 are enrolled in Medicaid
(3,439) children under age 5 are enrolled in CHIP
Families of four with an income of up to \$41,447 (235% of the federal poverty line) are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP

For Medicaid enrolled children

85% of 15 month olds had three or more doctor visits
93% of 12-24 month olds had at least one primary care visit
There has been a 100% increase in CHIP enrollment since 1996.

Table Four
Stakeholder Inventory And Contact Sheet

Broad Stakeholder Groups	Potential (specific) Stakeholders	Existing Contact	Key Issues for this group	Strategy for Making contact	Person(s) Responsible
Faith Community	First Presbyterian, Second Baptist, Saint Francis, Buddhist Temple	Rev. Jones Brother Johnson Monsignor Beehan	1. located in low income areas 2. may soon have access to federal funding	Personal visit or speak at Interfaith Council (IFC)	Suzanne to call IFC first. Proceed with 1:1 meetings after presenting at IFC
Corporations Business					
Non-profit organizations that serve the "target population"					
Local Government					
State Government					
Civic Organizations					
Resident Associations					
Community volunteers					
Other funding organizations (i.e., foundations)					
Advocacy organizations					
Elected Officials					
Media					
Schools					
Higher Education					
Parents					
Health & Medicine					
Judiciary					
Young People					
Law Enforcement					

expanding
relationships



“informal”. The latter are not those in front of the television cameras, but are respected and known among their constituencies. The mobilization needs both types of stakeholders! Brainstorm this list using the worksheet provided in Table Four.

- Issues that are important to each stakeholder group.
- Strategies to deal with special issues related to each stakeholder group. Should United Way staff meet one-on-one to explain what the mobilization effort will entail? Who is positioned to make the most effective “approach” or host a meeting? Who has an existing relationship with the stakeholder(s)?

Table Four is designed to assist in the collection of information about stakeholders prior to contact taking place. Modify it to fit your community.

Learn Each Stakeholder’s Priorities
 Whether presenting to large groups or meeting one-on-one with individuals, there are several things to keep in mind:

- Clarify that your United Way is in the *exploration* phase related to a Community Mobilization in the area of (*school success, children’s health, youth violence prevention, safe neighborhoods, etc.*). Let them know that you are meeting with a variety of stakeholders to help identify potential partners in the Mobilization and to get assistance with the Asset Mapping process (discussed in a subsequent *Mobilization Matters*).
- Include people who reflect the ethnic, cultural, gender and age diversity of the community.

- Share the collected baseline data, and ask the following: 1) Are other data available regarding the issue (the stakeholder may have data or know of other relevant data sources)?; and, 2) Ask for a response to the data. *What surprised you about these data? What do you find most compelling?*
- Use questions similar to the ones in Table Five to guide the conversation during **one-on-one meetings** (or use your own questions). Following his/her response to each question, ask each stakeholder if they can recommend other people (inside or outside of their organization) who can provide relevant information or additional sources of data.

United Way-funded agencies and/or member agencies may need special attention. They represent those who are most likely to feel threatened by a new initiative. It may be best to meet with targeted leaders in that group first (i.e., agency executives who are well respected by their peers) and then hold group meetings. Since this will occur early in the process, it will be beneficial to discuss United Way’s actions to-date, and to solicit feedback and advice. The objective is to: 1) determine the best approach to involve organizations (in such a way that United Way helps each address their issues and concerns regarding the Mobilization); and to: 2) get their input about how the initiative can help them meet their organization’s goals—in other words, create a “win-win” situation (see Table Five on page 9).

**United Way of Central Carolinas, Inc.
 Charlotte, North Carolina**

“Doing a stakeholder analysis during the exploration phase will help you identify groups like this, e.g., those who are not part of the initiative but will be (or will feel they could be) affected by the initiative. Anticipation can reduce—but not eliminate—concerns, and it prepares United Way to deal with those concerns it cannot overcome.”

Lynn Otzman, Coordinator, Success By 6®

A stakeholder analysis will help you identify groups who could be affected by the initiative.

**United Way of Central Carolinas, Inc.
Charlotte, North Carolina**

The Success By 6[®] Board decided to focus on a particular part of the city so Success By 6 could address school readiness comprehensively. Demographically, there were five areas of the city that would be appropriate targets for the initiative. The Board went on a tour of the neighborhoods. It analyzed the resources and impediments, and made an estimate of the chances for a successful initiative in each area.

The information considered included:

- Demographics to support the selection of the location;
- Needs of each neighborhood with input from neighborhood residents;
- Extent to which the neighborhood had active neighborhood organizations with some history of accountability, leadership capacity, and demonstrated willingness to work collaboratively with other community organizations;
- Presence of some collaborative activity among the organizations already in place in the neighborhood;
- Availability of an appropriate agency to serve as a lead agency; and,
- Sufficient expertise among agencies in the neighborhood to structure and provide a continuum of services.

Dialogue with Citizens

For some stakeholder groups it will make sense to hold town meetings and discussion groups to gather information. This technique can work well with a wide range of constituencies, including a small group of neighborhood residents, a group of parents, service providers or business leaders. By meeting face-to-face with these groups you will learn:

- areas in which there is a consensus of opinion;
- how people perceive the issues; and,
- what isn't working for them in the community.

Remember to begin any dialogue by providing the same information you shared with stakeholders before conducting one-on-one interviews.

speaking to the public

Table Five

Sample Questions for One-on-One Meetings

Stakeholder:	Contact:	Phone:	Email:
Question	Response	Recommendations	
What are the key issues facing (children, youth, elders, neighborhoods, etc.) from your organization's perspective?			
What needs to be done to solve the problems you've mentioned?			
How can collaboration be a part of the solution to these problems?			
How does your organization work on issues affecting (children, youth, elders, neighborhoods, etc.)?			
What is your focus?			
Have you been involved in other collaborations? In what ways were they effective? What factors limited their effectiveness?			
What assets (individuals or organizations) are available in our community and might be built on as we mobilize to address?			
How much do you know about how United Way works?			
What strengths do you see United Way bringing to the issues affecting (children, youth, elders, etc.)?			
Who else would you suggest we talk to?			
Would your organization be interested in pursuing a partnership with United Way and others to focus on)			

talking with citizens

assessments,
guidance,
insights

Sample questions for a dialogue with service recipients:

- What services do you (*and your children, youth, elderly parents, etc.*) need the most?
- What problems do you experience with local agencies that provide those services?
- Describe a good experience with an agency that provides the services.
- Describe a negative experience with an agency that provides the services.
- What are the barriers to getting the services you need when you need them?
- What kind of changes would make the services more effective? More accessible?
- What assets (individuals or organizations) are available in our community that might be strengthened if the mobilization addresses (*focus area*)?



Sample questions for a dialogue with service providers:

- Why do families need the service(s) your agency provides?
- What are your biggest problems in providing services to (*target population*)?
- What problems do you think families encounter in trying to access services that you provide?
- What has been your experience working together with other agencies to provide services to (*target population*)? What barriers have you experienced in working collaboratively?
- If you could change one procedure, practice, or policy that affects consumers of the services you provide, what would it be?
- What assets (individuals or organizations) are available in the community, and might be strengthened if we mobilize to address (*focus area*)?

United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (UWSEPA) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

UWSEPA's early childhood initiative held multiple discussion groups:

- **Community Forums with Children's Providers and Advocates.** Four neighborhood meetings attracted hundreds of children's providers and advocates who shared their assessment of strengths and gaps in services, and their recommendations for improvement.
- **Discussions with Kindergarten Teachers and Pediatricians.** Pediatricians and kindergarten teachers participated in separate discussion groups to contribute their insights about child and family needs, service gaps, and recommendations for improvement.
- **Perspectives from Key Community Leaders.** The initiative conducted interviews with community leaders, elected officials, academicians, labor leaders, business leaders and state officials. A planning committee comprised of leading local leaders helped to guide the discussion and resultant process.
- **National Advisory Panel.** The initiative convened an advisory group of national experts on school readiness to provide insight and guidance.
- **Parenting Best Practices.** The Philadelphia Department of Human Services engaged a leading social science research firm to study the best practices in parenting support and education.
- **Assessment of Service Availability and Indicators of school readiness.** The initiative gathered extensive local, state, and national information about services and indicators.

**United Way of Dade County
Miami, Florida**

Success By 6[®] in Miami began with a desire for a formal report card for the status of young children, aged zero to six in Dade County. Success By 6[®] collected the data, performed the research, and communicated the results to the broader community. As United Way recruited partners, they used the report card to inform and engage partners, to develop a strategic plan to serve young children in their community, and as a baseline for outcome measurement.

If there is another initiative in the community that relates to the focus of your proposed Community Mobilization, consider how United Way efforts might complement or enhance its efforts. Learn more about the focus of that initiative and any barriers it faces. United Way may bring resources that an existing initiative lacks (e.g., a city- or community-wide focus,

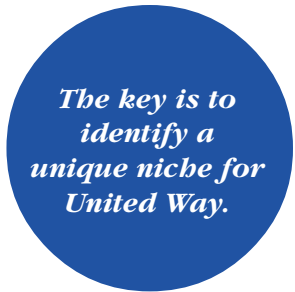
close ties to the business community, financial resources, research capacity). The key is to identify a unique niche for United Way to address the Community Mobilization focus area; the Stakeholder Assessment provides a way for others in your community to have input in defining that niche.

Step Four: Communicate the Data Collected

Summarize the data collected. Provide a summary to the Mobilization participants in order to help them develop a vision for the community.

The Summary Issue Matrix from COMPASS II in Table Six provides a way to summarize the findings from each data source.

Once data gathering has been completed, your United Way has extensive statistical and subjective information as well as invaluable insight from key stakeholders and citizens. The next step is to conduct asset mapping.



communicating the data

Table Six
Summary Issue Matrix

Statement of Key Findings	Issue #1 Name of Issue	Issue # 2 Name of Issue	Issue #3 Name of Issue
Survey Results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household survey Key Informant survey 			
Indicator Information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number of people affected Geographic areas most affected Population groups most affected Trends over time Comparisons to your state and to the national indicators 			

mobilization matters

The following sources were utilized in developing this document:

Bank of America/United Way of America Success By 6® Expansion Initiative Second Year 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; a CTA Publication. Call 800-397-2282 to order a copy.

COMPASS II: Guide to Community Building. United Way of America. 2001.

Early to Rise: Report Supplement. A Report on the Improving School Readiness Project. United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, City of Philadelphia, School District of Philadelphia. November, 2001.

100% Access/Zero Health Disparities Campaign Developers' Guide. United Way of America. 2001.

National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (The Urban Institute)
<http://www.urban.org/nnip/>

The Aspen Institute <http://www.aspeninst.org>

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 to provide a continuum of services and supports for each of 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.



United Way
of America

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701 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2045

