COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANT APPLICATION
MEASURABLE OUTCOMES
UPDATED JUNE 2018

FOCUSING ON MEASURABLE OUTCOMES TO DEMONSTRATE COMMUNITY IMPACT

In the 2019 grant cycle, United Way of Larimer County is asking agencies funded through the Community Impact grants to report on the results of their program's impact via measurable outcomes. A measurable outcome answers the question, "What difference did your services make for the clients/participants served?" Agencies will use an outcomes table to communicate their goals during the application process and will utilize the table to report on results via a final report.

Each group will select target outcomes and outputs that they will work to achieve during the grant cycle. Each applicant will discuss how they will measure their results and provide information to show the correlation between funded activities and desired community outcomes in the areas of Youth & Education and/or Financial Stability. Grantees will also have the opportunity to submit client stories and qualitative information to highlight their collaboration's success.

With this focus, United Way of Larimer County seeks to capture the results of collective impact work, and the work of other collaborative groups that we fund, in ways that are quantifiable and can be succinctly conveyed to our donors and the community as a whole. We believe strongly that this approach will make United Way more successful in engaging donors and increasing funds to support community agency work, and will enable all of us to be more successful in advancing community goals in the areas of Youth & Education and Financial Stability.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MEASURABLE OUTCOMES?

Most organizations are already measuring their success using assessment tools that are targeted toward their particular client population. These may include self-reporting surveys, teacher/counselor surveys, individual or family follow-up interviews, and/or online instruments that allow clients to report their status several months, or even a year, after receiving services. These assessment tools and the resulting data allow the agency to demonstrate to their funders and supporters that their services produce success for their clients after they leave the program.

Through most surveys, agencies can gather both qualitative data about client experiences (descriptions of successes and barriers to success they encountered) and quantitative data (e.g. increases in family earnings, elevated GPA, etc.). The

important factor in determining a successful instrument is the quality of data the agency is able to gather. For example, is it reliable (i.e. is the approach supported by national research and/or best practices in your field)? Do you consistently get a good client response rate? And, are the questions in the instrument aligned with the target outcomes and outputs? All of these are important considerations to ensuring that you receive high quality and usable data.

While each collaborative group must agree on the community outcome(s) they will work toward with funds from United Way, each individual organization may select their own target outputs and outcomes and may decide on the measurement tool that is best for them. United Way of Larimer County encourages collaborative groups to look for consistent measurements among members, but does not require that individual agencies utilize the same tool, questions, or survey.   That said, each activity that will be funded should be based on research-based indicators and relate directly to the target outcomes and outputs.

For example, if a group chose "kindergarten readiness" as its community outcome, the group might set as a measurable target outcome that "Members of the collaborative group will increase access to high quality early childhood education to families at or below 150% of the poverty level by increasing scholarships for care in their centers by 5%." Grantees would need to collect baseline data on the number of scholarships offered currently, family income of new families who receive scholarships and overall census increases. The assessment tools and the data tracking system that each group designs should be appropriate to their specific outcomes, their target population, the type of services provided and the chosen timeline for measuring.

We recognize that many agency directors have years of experience crafting and tracking measurable outcomes, and have already been providing this data successfully to other funders and donors. We hope that you will be willing to share your experience and expertise with measurable outcomes with those who are less familiar with this type of reporting. In addition, we will be offering two free trainings on evaluation in the coming months for agencies who would like more information and support in this area. Please visit https://www.uwaylc.org/Nonprofit-Excellence-Series to learn more about this and other upcoming trainings.