



UNITED WAY OF SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA AGENDA FOR COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS - 2007

Executive Summary

United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania has been engaged for several years in a planning process to translate our vision for the community into a set of strategies that make better use of our unique capabilities to make a difference in our region. This process has led us from seeing United Way primarily as a fundraising organization that supports a network of excellent human services agencies to seeing United Way primarily as a community leadership organization – one that works with the larger community, including foundations, governments, businesses and nonprofits, to set important and achievable goals, identify the best strategies for achieving those goals and then mobilize the financial and human resources necessary to reach those goals. While we remain committed to supporting a high quality infrastructure of health and human service organizations that help so many of our vulnerable residents to overcome challenges and succeed in life, we believe we can best enable those health and human service organizations to achieve outcomes that improve life in this region by taking a more strategic approach to investing our resources.

In our planning process, we identified three long-term *community level goals* that encompassed the essence of the goals we have sought since the adoption of our 2000 Strategic Plan:

- Children will be successful in school and prepared for life
- Households will be able to gain stability and become self-sufficient
- Seniors will have the supports needed for healthy aging.

Our research consistently showed that:

- Too many children are not succeeding in school because –
 - They are not ready for school when they enter kindergarten;
 - They already lag far behind their counterparts in critical reading and math skills at the key transition points of 5th and 8th grade; and
 - They do not receive the social, emotional and development supports that make it possible to handle the stresses of childhood and adolescence.
- Too many adults are not prepared to be self-reliant because –
 - They have been left unprepared for adulthood by education systems that focus on a narrow pathway to educational success
 - They lack basic literacy and other critical skills necessary to get a job
 - They lack connections to the job market and training opportunities

- They lack financial literacy skills and savings incentives
- Too many seniors are unnecessarily at risk of losing their ability to live independently in their own homes because –
 - They are disconnected from the human services infrastructure;
 - They do not get support from their neighbors and communities, and are at risk of isolation and abandonment in personal and environmental emergencies; and
 - They lack access to basic services that would enable them to deal with some of the routine household chores and personal maintenance activities that are made difficult by aging, chronic illnesses and disabilities.

Based on these findings, we developed a multi-tiered approach to describing United Way's Solutions Agenda, which is detailed in the following pages. For each of the long-term, *community level goals* the Solutions Agenda identifies a **Priority Agenda**, consisting of:

- **Priority objective(s)** that must be achieved at critical life transition points – for example, the objective that every child arrives at kindergarten ready for school;
- **Priority strategies** that have been proven to work in achieving the priority objective *and* to which United Way can add value based on its unique capabilities, such as (for example) the priority of expanding the availability of high-quality preschool centers so that more children will arrive at kindergarten ready for school – where United Way's history of leadership in influencing public policy, partnering with foundations and the corporate sector, and implementing model programs make it uniquely positioned to add value;
- **Priority actions** that United Way will take to implement the priority strategies, such as (for example) organizing and leading coalitions to advocate for increased and better-targeted public funding for improving and sustaining preschool quality; and
- **Implementation goals** by which success will be measured over time, such as (for example) improving the quality rating of 320 preschool centers serving 20,000 children from low income households

The priority strategies and actions identified in this *Solutions Agenda* will inform United Way's prioritization of its investments of human and financial resources over the next few years. These components of our plan will serve to highlight the value United Way adds to our community's response to the region's crises. To the extent our resources allow, however, we intend to continue to support other strategies and approaches that play a significant role in achieving our priority objectives.

Another integral part of our *Solutions Agenda* is our commitment to continuing the work or preserving the "social fabric" of the community. One of the ways we will continue to do this is by supporting a safety net of basic services that protects all individuals and families in our region. These basic services include emergency food, clothing and shelter, assistance for those with disabilities, services for victims of domestic violence and other crimes, and services that respond in times of public disasters and other emergencies.

Maintaining the social fabric also means preserving and enhancing a strong human services infrastructure in our region, protecting and revitalizing our neighborhoods and engaging the public in civic leadership and volunteer service to the community. In addition to providing financial support, we will continue to work to promote higher standards, best practices and

better access to services. One way we will promote better access to services is through the development of a comprehensive, state-of-the-art information and referral system that will enable people to find the resources they need. Through the Donor Choice option in our workplace fundraising campaign we will continue to enable thousands of human services agencies in our region to raise critically important funds, but we will strengthen our efforts to work more closely with many more of those agencies to identify and utilize additional opportunities to improve our community impact. We will continue to engage thousands of volunteers in region-wide service projects that build community while providing valuable resources to organizations and communities. United Way's role as a "leading change agent in the region" puts us in a unique position to convene, facilitate and implement initiatives that assure continuous improvement in the quality of life in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

In this *Agenda for Community Solutions 2007*, we provide a more detailed description of five priority approaches for achieving our three community level goals, we explain why we think these priority approaches are essential to the community and right for this United Way, and we describe the kinds of activities that United Way will lead and support in our effort to create community impact.

Here is a summary of the five priority approaches:

The Priority Agenda: Success by Six

- ***The priority objective:*** Children arrive in kindergarten ready to learn.
- ***The priority strategies***

These are the broad approaches that we believe will help the community advance toward the priority objective *and in which United Way can play a significant role*, in partnership with other community institutions:

- Increase the number of high quality early care and education centers in the region;
 - Implement new and creative efforts to engage parents as partners in the education of their children and to improve the skill level of parenting educators in the early childhood education system; and
 - Develop and enlist public support for expansion of quality early learning experiences using "cause marketing" techniques.
- ***Implementation actions:***

To implement the priority strategy of increasing the number of high quality early care and education centers, we will:

- Enroll additional early care and education centers in United Way's multi-disciplinary quality improvement initiative and support those programs in a way that leverages resources from and complements the Keystone STARS program;
- Provide resources to centers to support professional development of staff and sustain high levels of quality;
- Identify a "best practices" model for kindergarten transition that can be implemented by school districts across the region; and
- Advocate for public policy changes that expand access to high quality early care and education programs for all children in the region and provide financial and networking support to organizations that are effective in carrying out this work.

To implement the priority strategy of engaging parents as partners in their children's education, we will:

- Develop a region-wide effort to build the skills of both teachers and parents to support emergent literacy pre-reading skills for young children and assist centers in providing an enriched preschool literacy environment;
- Provide targeted funding for parent education and support programs that improve the skill level of parenting educators in the early childhood education system;
- Provide general operating support to agencies based on alignment with this priority; and
- Convene providers for peer learning, networking and other quality improvement opportunities.

To implement the priority strategy of enlisting public support, we will:

- Launch a "cause development" effort in collaboration with other regional partners
- Educate parents about the importance of selecting high quality preschool programs for their children;
- Convene school district officials, our foundation partners, community leaders and others to advance the high quality agenda;
- Engage the business community in educating their employees about what quality early learning means and how to get it;
- Assist the business community in identifying creative ways they can support the child care needs of their employees;
- Use United Way of America's *Born Learning* campaign to build awareness of the importance of learning in the early years;
- Develop partnerships with local institutions such as the Please Touch Museum, Smith Playground, and WHY.

- ***Implementation goals:***

United Way will use its human and financial resources to raise the quality of 320 (approximately 13 percent) of the region's early care and education centers to enable them to achieve a STAR 3 or higher designation, thereby improving the school readiness of approximately 20,000 children.

Other Strategies and Actions

United Way will advance public and private sector policies and investments that will promote preparing children to succeed in school, as well as mobilize volunteers and educate the community on these and related issues. In addition to implementing the priority strategies and actions outlined above, United Way will also support related strategies and actions that are linked to preparing a child to enter school ready to learn but which may not fit the more detailed outline above. Other activities not directly providing early learning services that may be supported by United Way because they are related to this priority include prenatal care, maternal and child health services, services for young children with special needs, and child protective services for young children.

The Priority Agenda: Staying On Track

- ***The priority objective:*** Children are successful in school and graduate from high school.

- ***The priority strategies***

These are the broad approaches that we believe will help the community advance toward the priority objective *and in which United Way can play a significant role*, in partnership with other community institutions:

- Increase the number of high quality after-school, weekend and summer programs that make measurable impact on academic success and are targeted to middle school and early high school youth who are at risk of eventually dropping out of school;
- Expand and improve intensive one-on-one mentoring programs that successfully address the needs of middle school and early high school youth who are at risk of eventually dropping out of school.

- ***Implementation actions***

To implement the priority strategy of increasing the number of high quality after-school, weekend and summer programs that make measurable impact on academic success, we will:

- Provide targeted funding and technical assistance to assist out-of-school time programs in achieving higher quality and improving staff competencies and skill levels;
- Provide general operating support to agencies based on alignment with this priority; and
- Convene service providers for peer learning, networking and other quality improvement opportunities.

To implement the priority strategy of expanding and improving intensive one-on-one mentoring programs, we will:

- Provide targeted funding and technical assistance to improve the practices of service providers.
- Support and help coordinate volunteer mentor recruitment training and placement.
- Provide targeted funding and technical assistance to expand the pool of trained mentors of color and support training designed to respond to the needs of youth facing the challenge of drugs and violence in their communities.
- Provide general operating support to agencies based on alignment with this priority.
- Convene service providers for peer learning, networking and systemic expansion and improvement opportunities.
- Provide targeted funding and technical assistance to enable providers of related youth programming services to serve as portals to effective mentoring programs.
- Promote and market volunteer mentoring by conducting or supporting public awareness and community outreach campaigns.

- ***Implementation goals:***

- Improve the quality of at least 300 out-of-school time programs in the region to increase positive academic achievement outcomes for over 50,000 middle and high school students over the next five years.

- Launch a recruitment strategy that will result in a commitment of at least 500 professional male mentors of color over the next five years who will remain in a one-on-one mentor relationship with a young person for at least one year.
- Improve the quality of 100 mentor programs in the region that demonstrate measured effectiveness in implementing the Elements of Effective Practice in Mentoring over the next five years

Other Strategies and Actions

United Way will advance public and private sector policies and investments that will promote school success, as well as mobilize volunteers and educate the community on these and related issues. In addition to implementing the priority strategies and activities outlined above, United Way will also support strategies and activities that are linked to achieving our other outcome goal but which may not fit the more detailed outline above. Other activities appropriately supported by United Way include programs using evidence-based approaches to provide general support for a child's environmental and social well being, such as out-of-school-time programs designed primarily to keep young people occupied and out of trouble during the after-school hours, and other interventions assuring that children and their families are able to overcome the behavioral, social, health and economic barriers that interfere with the child's development and undermine the child's ability to learn.

The Priority Agenda: Learning and Working

- ***The priority objective:*** – Youth who are not in school are able to acquire necessary skills and education to begin a career.
- ***The priority strategy:***

The approach that we believe will help the community advance toward the priority objective *and in which United Way can play a significant role*, in partnership with other community institutions:

- Build systems that will connect out-of-school youth, aged 16 to 24 (who are not in school and not working) to opportunities that combine education and employment, and provide mentoring and other supports to help them begin a career.
- ***Priority actions:***

To implement the priority strategy of supporting work/learning model programming, we will:

- Provide targeted funding and technical assistance to develop and implement “industry pipeline” work experiences (*e.g.*, financial services apprenticeships) with the Philadelphia Youth Network, Philadelphia Academies, and others;
- Develop marketing programs to generate additional workplace opportunities for out-of-school youth;
- Establish a Youth Wage Fund to support the placement of out-of-school youth in jobs with career potential;
- Engage the business community in the recruitment and training of workplace mentors for new workers;

- Support programs that offer social services, counseling and other services to youth in alternative education programs to help them overcome the practical and behavioral challenges that may inhibit their success;
 - Increase public awareness and support for addressing the needs of out-of-school youth; and
 - Advocate for public policy changes that support this priority, such as business tax credit incentives to employ out-of-school youth and changes in state subsidy regulations to remove disincentives for schools to re-enroll out-of-school youth.
- **Implementation Goals:**
 - Provide 1,000 additional workplace experiences for out-of-school youth, emphasizing exposure to fields where they may find future employment;
 - Enlist the participation of 100 additional United Way donor corporations in providing work experience programming for out-of-school youth leading to future employment;
 - Raise \$5 million for the Youth Wage Fund; and
 - Recruit and train 500 workplace mentors to support the Business mentoring Youth program

Other Strategies and Actions

United Way will advance public and private sector policies and investments that will benefit youth employment and related issues, as well as mobilize volunteers and educate the community on these and related issues. In addition to the priority activities outlined above, United Way will also support related programs, strategies and approaches that are linked to achieving our other outcome goals but which may not fit the more detailed outline above. Other activities appropriately supported by United Way include programs using evidence-based approaches to assist out of school youth in overcoming the behavioral, social and economic barriers that interfere with their ability to return to school and join the regional workforce.

The Priority Agenda: Working and Saving

- **The priority objective:** – Individuals are prepared for successful employment, are able to obtain and/or advance to living-wage jobs, and are able to increase their savings and preserve their assets.
- **The priority strategies:**

These are the broad approaches that we believe will help the community advance toward the priority objective *and in which United Way can play a significant role*, in partnership with other community institutions:

- Foster and support industry-specific job training in high-demand fields, that also integrates the development of workforce literacy skills (e.g. basic math, written and verbal communication, problem solving, and teamwork).;
- Develop and sustain workplace mentoring programs;
- Support and improve the quality of adult literacy programs;
- Develop new resources to assist adults with some college credits who have not obtained a postsecondary degree to return to school and graduate;

- Provide and promote incentives for increased savings and preservation of assets;
- Expand access to high quality financial literacy programs; and
- Expand, enhance and improve access to “portals” providing comprehensive assistance in accessing tax benefits and other entitlements as well as referrals to financial literacy and savings incentive programs..

- ***Implementation actions:***

To implement the priority strategy of fostering and supporting industry-specific job training, we will:

- Coordinate partnerships between employers and job training programs to help connect employers with prospective job candidates and to develop innovative career ladder approaches for low-wage workers
- Provide targeted and general operating support for providers of industry-specific job training and workforce literacy services
- Convene providers for peer learning, networking and other quality improvement opportunities.
- Advocate for public policy changes to support and expand jobs programs, and provide financial and networking support to organizations that are effective in advocating desired public policy changes.

To implement the priority strategy of developing workplace mentoring programs, we will:

- Establish a project fund to support mentor recruitment (including marketing effort to promote need for such mentors), and training/technical assistance supports and incentives for workplace mentors.
- Provide general operating support to agencies that operate workplace mentor programs
- Convene providers of such programs on a periodic basis for peer learning and networking opportunities.
- Convene employers that utilize on-site, workplace mentors or seek to launch a workplace mentor program for peer learning and networking opportunities.

To implement the priority strategy of supporting and improving adult literacy programs, we will:

- Provide targeted funding for technical assistance and training to providers of literacy services;
- Provide general operating support to agencies based on alignment with this priority; and
- Convene providers for peer learning, networking and other quality improvement opportunities.

To implement the priority strategy of assisting adults with some postsecondary education credits to return to school and graduate, we will:

- Through Graduate! Philadelphia, create broad-based understanding among multiple stakeholders that college degree completion is central to the region’s prosperity, so that it becomes part of the individual, civic, educational, and business consciousness in the region, such that they are motivated and informed to take concerted action to increase the number of graduates.

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- Facilitate the development and adoption of postsecondary institutional practices that support successful and timely degree completion for all adult students (first-time students and returning students.)
- Promote local, regional, state and federal policies and practices that recognize college degree completion as essential to economic growth and prosperity.

To implement the priority strategy of promoting opportunities for savings and preservation of assets, we will:

- Raise funds for and support programs offering Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) for education, home ownership and purchases necessary to maintain employment;
- Provide financial and networking support to organizations that are effective in advocating for public policy changes that enhance savings possibilities;
- Provide financial and networking support to organizations that are effective in advocating public policy changes that promote mainstream banking options for low income households.

To implement the priority strategy of expanding, enhancing and improving access to high quality financial literacy programs, we will:

- Provide targeted funding for technical assistance to financial literacy training providers;
- Provide general operating support to agencies based on alignment with this priority; and
- Convene providers for peer learning, networking and other quality improvement opportunities.

To implement the priority strategy of expanding access to “portals” providing comprehensive assistance in accessing tax benefits and other entitlements, we will:

- Provide targeted funding to launch additional programs that provide low wage workers with free tax assistance and information on benefits to which they may be entitled;
- Provide general operating support to agencies based on alignment with this priority;
- Convene providers for peer learning, networking and other quality improvement opportunities; and
- Support and coordinate volunteer recruitment and training to provide the working poor with free tax assistance.

- ***Implementation goals***

We will set specific goals to be accomplished through the implementation actions outlined above as we develop further information about the capacity of our program partners and other collaborators.

Other Strategies and Actions:

United Way will advance public and private sector policies and investments that will promote adult self-sufficiency as well as mobilize volunteers and educate the community on these and related issues. In addition to implementing the priority activities outlined above, United Way will also support related programs, strategies and approaches that are linked to achieving our other outcome goals but which may not fit the more detailed outline above.

Other activities appropriately supported by United Way include programs using evidence-based approaches to assist adults and families in overcoming the behavioral, social and economic barriers that interfere with their ability to return to school and succeed in the regional workforce.

The Priority Agenda: Healthy Aging at Home

- ***The priority objective:*** Seniors who are able to live independently will have access to the supportive services necessary for healthy aging at home

- ***The priority strategies:***

These are the broad approaches that we believe will help the community advance toward the priority objective *and in which United Way can play a significant role*, in partnership with other community institutions:

- Improve the quality and availability of in-home services for seniors, such as health aide, homemaker services, household chores, errands and friendly visits;
- Promote and assist in the accreditation of senior centers;
- Expand community outreach efforts to identify and connect isolated seniors to services that support independent living, including opportunities for social interaction (at home or in senior centers);
- Replicate the NORC supportive services concept in additional viable locations throughout the region; and
- Expand and improve services for seniors that help maintain the physical integrity of their homes and improve safety.

- ***Priority actions:***

To implement the priority strategy of improving the quality and availability of in-home services for seniors, we will:

- Provide targeted funds for technical assistance, training and other supports to help providers of health aide and homemaker services implement best practices in these areas;
- Provide general operating support to agencies that provide high quality health aide and homemaker services;
- Convene providers of health aide and homemaker services for peer learning, networking and other quality improvement opportunities;
- Support and coordinate volunteer recruitment and training (including senior volunteers);
- Provide financial and networking support to organizations that are effective in advocating for expansion of high quality home and community-based care options;
- Provide financial and networking support to community education campaigns and other projects that address issues faced in caring for elderly relatives, including respite care; and
- Support public policy that improves access to home-based services.

To implement the priority strategy of promoting and assisting in the accreditation of senior centers, we will:

- Provide general operating support to high quality senior centers; and

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- Provide targeted funds for technical assistance, training and other supports to help senior centers implement related best practices.

To implement the priority strategy of expanding community outreach efforts to connect isolated seniors to services, we will:

- Provide targeted funding to improve outreach efforts by senior centers, faith-based institutions and other organizations, including those based on innovative approaches and increased coordination with other service providers.

To implement the priority strategy of replicating the NORC supportive services concept, we will:

- Provide general operating support to agencies that provide targeted services in NORCs;
- Create pool of funds to which agencies serving NORCs can draw down funds for one-time only projects (e.g. purchase of vans to help get seniors to centers or food shopping; grants to provide seed money that will help high school students launch light home maintenance services that cater to seniors);
- Develop volunteer partnerships to launch support services that are not currently provided (e.g. partner with high schools to have students perform friendly visits for academic credit; develop linkages with younger retired seniors seeking to provide services for younger seniors);
- Convene periodic peer learning sessions for agencies that provide services to NORCs; and
- Convene food and pharmacy providers in NORCs to develop/enhance delivery of food and prescription drug to seniors in these areas.

To implement the priority strategy of expanding and improving home maintenance and safety services, we will:

- Provide targeted financial and volunteer support for home repair, home maintenance and home modification services, especially those that prevent falls, maintain safe heating and cooling conditions, better enable seniors to perform day-to-day tasks and promote overall safety and independence (such as electronic monitoring and response systems);
- Promote and sponsor individual development account (IDA) programs that enable family care givers to make undertake home modifications that better enable seniors to perform day-to-day tasks and promote overall safety and independence;
- Support and coordinate volunteer recruitment and training to support programs that provide home repair, home maintenance and home modification services;
- Provide general operating support to agencies based on alignment with this priority;
- Provide financial and networking support to organizations that are effective in advocating for development of better access to funds for home modifications and home repairs;
- Provide financial and networking support to organizations that are effective in advocating for expansion of emergency funds programs for home heating and cooling programs, including LIHEAP; and
- Provide targeted financial support for programs that assist seniors in navigating legal and bureaucratic hurdles relating to public benefits, predatory commercial practices, etc.

- ***Implementation goals***

We will set specific goals to be accomplished through the implementation actions outlined above as we develop further information about the capacity of our program partners and other collaborators.

Other Strategies and Actions

United Way will advance public and private sector policies and investments that will promote seniors living independently, as well as mobilize volunteers and educate the community on these and related issues. In addition to implementing the priorities outlined above, United Way will also support related programs, strategies and approaches that are related to enabling seniors to maintain their independence. These may include: revitalization efforts that seek to make neighborhoods with a concentration of senior citizens economically stable, desirable and safe, and center-based opportunities for socialization, education, recreation and health screening and referral.