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# United Way and University Partnerships in Community-Wide Human Services Planning and Plan Implementation: The Case of Lincoln/Lancaster County, Nebraska

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**ABSTRACT.** Given the similar interests of United Way organizations and universities in planning, implementation, and evaluation of human

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services, the two social institutions could be extensively and effectively partnering with one another. However, there is little documentation that such cooperative efforts are taking place. This article describes one such collaboration in Lincoln, Nebraska. The purpose of the article is to show the potential of such collaboration to improve community-wide coordination and outcomes by following the principles of a community-engagement model, to generate more effective use of evaluative tools that can assist in developing evidence-based practices in community planning, and to connect areas of study within the university to United Way efforts. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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There is a United Way organization in virtually everyone's backyard. In total, there are nearly 1,400 United Ways in communities around the nation. Each United Way is independently incorporated and governed by volunteers from the community. The mission of each United Way is to "improve people's lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities" (United Way of America, 2004c, Mission section). The United Ways of America annually generate approximately 5 billion dollars, funds that are then reinvested by local United Ways back into their home communities to help children, families, and adults through service agencies and programs.

Over the years, universities have been strong contributors to United Ways, their faculty, staff, and students serving as donors and volunteers for United Ways. In some communities, more monies are contributed to United Way from the local university than from any other workplace. Yet, despite the fact that universities share the interest of United Ways in working toward positive community change, there has been little documentation or analysis of *institutional* partnerships between universities and United Ways.

For a four-year period, from the fall of 2000 until the end of 2004, the United Way of Lincoln/Lancaster County and the University of Nebraska, together with local government entities (e.g., City Council, County Board, Human Services Administrator, etc.) and community

foundations, worked together on human services planning, implementation, assessment and evaluation, and infrastructure development. We explore here the potential outcomes of collaborative planning and implementation, as well as the more specific impact of university involvement in community-wide planning processes and in United Way efforts.

**UNITED WAYS AND UNIVERSITIES:  
AN OVERVIEW OF THE MUTUAL NEEDS  
AND OPPORTUNITIES**

There has been a long history in the United States of members of the community coming together to raise charitable funds to address pressing community needs. The United Way model—known for many years as “Community Chests”—began in Denver, Colorado, in 1887, and United Ways are now leaders in the U.S. in raising and distributing funds for social service agencies and programs, together distributing an estimated \$4.4 billion in 2002-2003 (Barman, 2002; United Way of America, 2004a, 2004b). Reflecting a societal shift in preference for increased accountability and results-driven investments, United Ways have joined the trend of federal and local government in moving from the simple distribution of funds to agencies to a strategy of community-impact funding that seeks to invest funds in priority areas that will have a significant, positive impact (Foundation Center, 2003, citing Strom, 2003; Plantz, Greenway, & Hendricks, 1997; United Way of America, 2004a, 2004b; United Way of America Task Force on Impact, 1996).

For United Ways, the challenge of documenting community impact is daunting. Human services delivery systems in most communities are fragmented, dependent on myriad independent provider organizations, and often also reliant on complex governmental funding and eligibility criteria. United Ways often find themselves as one of the sole coordinating organizations in a community charged with the difficult task of setting priorities that the community will fund and embrace, developing measures to evaluate community impact, and collecting and analyzing outcome data. Although United Way of America provides its local United Ways with guidance for assessing the impacts of the agencies and programs being funded, many United Ways lack the internal expertise or time and financial resources to be able to easily and effectively collect data for determining impact.

Universities, of course, have extensive capacity to measure impact. But do they have the willingness to help?

Increasingly, universities are re-visioning the ways in which they, as institutions, may contribute to and interact with their communities (e.g., Boyer, 1990; Kellogg Commission, 1999). Individual faculty and students, of course, have long contributed to their communities through personal financial contributions and applied research. Often, however, universities as institutions have been less effective in their attempts to offer resources and research in a community-accessible, relevant, and sustainable manner. Despite a long history of universities being involved in community service and governmental activities (though sometimes less effectively than desired, notes Szanton, 1981/2001), some have characterized the American system of higher education as one that sets university and community apart, a system that creates an expert-audience divide in which community and university do not work as equal partners but in which the university approaches the community as a "client" or uses it as a "laboratory" (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2000; Mayfield, 2001; see also Kellogg Commission, 2001). From outside the academy, universities are often perceived as impenetrable institutions populated with faculty and students whose time is claimed by educational and research demands that make them unavailable for "real-world" tasks, and whose narrow fields of interests are inapplicable to "real-life" initiatives or multidisciplinary insights. Universities are also seen as lacking long-term commitments to communities. Although community-university cooperations through the Cooperative Extension Service and through HUD's Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) program, administered through HUD's Office of University Partnerships, have been notable exceptions, successfully overcoming negative stereotypes and wary perceptions, such collaborative community-university ventures are deemed the exception by those outside the academy, not the rule.

Increasingly, however, university participants in community-university partnerships have been moving away from a model that posits university as expert and community as recipient (Cone & Payne, 2002). Instead, some are exploring "how institutions themselves model citizenship" (Cone & Payne, p. 203) and a more holistic model of the "engaged university" in which faculty and students come to the table as community members and in which all participants in community processes are recognized as contributing knowledge and expertise (Al-Kodmany, 1999; Cone & Payne, 2002; Mayfield, 2001). Under this approach, communities are involved in the ongoing development of university research and other initiatives, and universities are involved in community initiatives and commit themselves to working on complex problems for longer time periods that reflect the needs

of the community and the demands of the issues, not the academic timetable. The potential advantages to such a model are that scholarship is more relevant and more easily applied to community issues and needs, and community initiatives are more efficiently and effectively planned, implemented, and evaluated. As one example, Al-Kodmany describes a University of Chicago neighborhood planning process in which the “expert” architects saved much time and money by involving early in the process community members who were able to identify weaknesses in the draft proposals based on their lived experience of the community. In this view of university-community partnerships, process and relationship-building become very important to accomplishing these positive outcomes (Al-Kodmany, 1999; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

United Ways offer to universities significant opportunities for community engagement. United Ways not only raise funds but also determine and evaluate which programs and initiatives in a community are worthwhile. University faculty, students, and staff tend to bring a strong focus on evidence-based practices as well as experience in developing evaluation tools, both of which can be significant assets to community initiatives. When such tools are developed in cooperation with other community members, the result is often a more useful and practical project design.

Thus, universities and United Ways are natural partners. They each bring to the partnership resources and expertise that are related and complementary. Partnership with the community has the potential to encourage university scholarship to develop in a manner more consistently relevant and accessible to the community. Partnership with the university has the potential to assist United Ways in developing planning and evaluation based more solidly on empirical, evidence-based practices than resources might otherwise allow. For both, working with a wider range of community stakeholders—all of whom mutually inform one another’s work—leads to more efficient, effective community building. What follows is an example of the partnership between the University of Nebraska, the United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County, and other key community partners.

**COMMUNITY CONTEXT:  
HUMAN SERVICES IN LINCOLN  
AND LANCASTER COUNTY, NEBRASKA**

For many years, as is true in most communities across the nation, human service agencies in Lincoln/Lancaster County faced challenges in

community-wide collaboration and planning. As in other communities, the human service agencies must balance their desire for coherent community processes with the very real issues of limited staff time, opportunity costs in participating, organizational livelihood, and competition with other agencies for scarce monetary support. Despite the disincentives, agencies in Lincoln/Lancaster County have a history of agency partnerships and even the establishment and support of a human services association that provides training, capacity-building, and networking for member agencies.

Elected officials, United Way leaders, and agencies had concerns about accountability and assessment: Were human services in Lincoln/Lancaster County meeting the community's needs? Were the services cost-effective? Were there ways to avoid unnecessary duplication so that service dollars could be spread over greater numbers of residents and initiatives? Many argued these kinds of concerns and objectives could be more effectively addressed in an integrated system of service planning and monitoring.

Interest in planning, effective implementation, and accurate assessment of service efficacy escalated as the community faced challenges of expanding from a small town to a larger city (with the population almost doubling in less than a 20-year period, and ultimately exceeding the 200,000 milestone in 1997), of a growing New American population (new immigration and Lincoln's designation as a refugee resettlement area led to significant demographic change as the non-white population increased by almost 50% in a decade), and of the concern that there would be decreased donor response to community-wide human services fund solicitations and that government was unlikely to boost its investment in human services even as needs increased.

Despite the foundation laid by creating mechanisms for joint funding decisions, Lincoln/Lancaster County lacked a community-wide procedure for human service prioritization, planning, implementation, and assessment. Over the past decade, several community-wide initiatives were attempted and then abandoned. One initiative was housed at and staffed by the United Way. Another was established through a contractual relationship with a nonprofit cooperative. Neither of the initiatives developed broad community support.

In the late 1990s the primary funders of human services in Lincoln/Lancaster County—the governmental city-county Joint Budget Committee and the United Way—pursued a results-based planning effort beginning with a comprehensive community needs assessment of hu-

man services. The goal was to broaden the focus from agencies to service areas. It was hoped that the effort might accomplish true coordination and integration of services across the entire human service spectrum. The needs assessment identified nine human service priority areas in the community.

Although the needs assessment had an influence simply by identifying priority areas, it also was clear that for broad impact to take place, additional efforts were needed. Who would ensure that action steps were being taken? Who was going to operationalize the plan and collect the necessary data? What were the steps to take to move away from a mentality of agencies operating independently to a situation where agencies would work collectively and effectively? The assessment and these questions set the stage for a university-United Way partnership that would encourage greater community cooperation, relationship-building, and knowledge-sharing.

### ***THE COLLABORATION PROJECT (COMMUNITY SERVICES IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT: C-SIP)***

The United Way and Lincoln/Lancaster County turned to the University of Nebraska as a first step in launching a new community-wide collaborative project called the Community Services Implementation Project (C-SIP). The United Way and the city/county contracted with the University (initially, two specific units of the University were involved in the contract). The University contributed expertise in human services, community consensus and facilitation, and outcome measurement, as well as input covering business, clinical psychology, community psychology, economics, educational psychology, law, pediatrics/public health, political science, public policy and public administration, social psychology, and sociology.

During the initial phase of the C-SIP project, a small group of four to five key staff representing the United Way, the city-county Joint Budget Committee, and the University worked together to vision the project. These partners made an initial, three-year commitment (later expanded to four years) to the project, both to signal the project's stability in order to draw full-fledged participation from other community partners, and to recognize that one year would not be sufficient to gauge the effort's impact. This multi-year commitment was coupled with a concerted effort by the partners to build working relationships as part of the actual project. In other words, what was needed was a relationship as well as project products. The time frame and intentionality also benefited the project by pro-



viding sufficient time for the university to assemble a staff, develop the necessary relationships with key stakeholders, access the relevant knowledge base and, in Holland's (2003) words, "escape the trap of episodic attention to individual grants and projects, which tend to create superficial and temporary relationships, and advance to a sustained reciprocal relationship that builds community capacity over time" (p. 4).

Over the course of the project, funding was provided not only by the United Way and city-county (approximately 40% of the total project costs), but also the university itself contributed to the effort (approximately 25% of in-kind and cash contributions—see below, this paragraph, for more details) as did local community foundations (approximately 15%) and community organizations (approximately 20%). A full-time coordinator for the project was hired and housed at the University, and the University contributed additional staff and student time as in-kind contributions, along with tangible office resources (computer time, web-hosting, supplies, etc.). Staff time and other resources (primarily in-kind contributions) also were contributed by the previously mentioned participating community organizations, the United Way, various city-county agencies and entities, and volunteers from the community.

*Organizational design phase.* A 12-member Steering Committee, comprising representatives of the United Way, the City (e.g., City Council, Mayor's Office, Urban Development), the County (e.g., County Commissioners), and the University was formed to provide overall direction and oversight to the initiative. The committee's first consideration was: Who should be involved in the project, and how would they communicate with one another, service agencies, and relevant others? The Steering Committee readily accepted the University's suggestion that the effort would only be successful with the buy-in of stakeholders beyond the immediate collaborators. That is, for the planning and implementation to materialize, the effort had to be embraced as a community-wide initiative that encouraged real community input, not a prescriptive process controlled solely by funders.

The Steering Committee created an Advisory Committee to garner community input and to make recommendations on the day-to-day implementation of the project. Persons representing various stakeholder groups, such as business, the public schools, nonprofit organizations, governmental units, funders, citizens-at-large, and the faith community were recruited to serve on the Advisory Committee.

The final step in the design phase for the C-SIP project was convening a community-wide, daylong planning session for human services to

inform agency personnel, community representatives, policymakers, consumers, business representatives, educators, and others about the project. More than 160 participants representing 91 Lincoln/Lancaster agencies and organizations participated in this initial event to address the process and content of implementation. Information was shared about the project's background and goals, related community planning efforts, and the outcomes of collaborative efforts. Small group sessions focusing on the priority areas were convened to initiate focused discussion in the priority areas. The daylong planning session began the process of engaging a broad spectrum of social service community members in C-SIP, and the small-group sessions were designed to establish initial membership in social service area work groups, or *coalitions*, that would form the backbone of the project (see below).

The University brought a commitment to and understanding of the importance of providing a context for diverse stakeholders to have venues for meaningful participation. The University was also able to research other community-wide efforts around the country to bring a national context to the human services challenges in the community (see, e.g., Perkins, 2002). The United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County brought the historical understanding of what had worked and what had not in previous efforts. United Way staff had first-hand knowledge of many of the partners and other community resources. The local United Way also brought the information and experience of the national United Way, and the practices and insights from other local United Ways, to the effort. Finally, the United Way not only contributed funding for the C-SIP project, but also brought a stature and credibility to the project given its significant role as a funder for community services.

*Implementation phase.* In order to effectively move from an agency focus to a services-areas focus, the Steering Committee decided to convene regularly scheduled meetings of stakeholders (primarily service agency management and staff-level representatives) in the substantive priority areas. These social services stakeholders were brought together to form the coalitions that would examine the action plans and benchmarks identified in the targeted service areas as part of the previous needs assessment. Co-chairs were recruited to coordinate the coalitions. The desire was for co-chairs to be well-versed in issues relating to the priority areas and/or representing agency or community members involved in the priority area. Co-chairs also needed to be respected individuals who could facilitate coalition meetings and activities. Often co-chair teams included one individual with practical expertise from a

community human services organization and another individual from the university with research and teaching expertise in the area. For example, the Transportation coalition co-chairs were a community member active in transportation issues and a member of the community's Planning Commission (subsequently elected to the City Council), and a Political Science faculty member who had researched and evaluated a number of urban transportation systems.

The community-wide, daylong planning event generated the coalitions' initial membership. However, one of the early tasks of the coalition was to identify and recruit additional members. The coalitions have been unrestricted bodies, open to any interested person in the community. Notification of coalition meetings has been made via direct notifications (via e-mail, postal mail, faxes, and web announcements) to interested parties, and all coalition meeting notes were posted on the project web site (see Community Services Initiative, 2004). After the first year, the project held a second day-long retreat to report back on coalition work, unveil action plans, consider opportunities for synergies, and evaluate as a large group the process as a whole and whether it was moving forward.

During the first year, coalitions met once per month to develop action plans with benchmarks for evaluation, and each coalition coordinated data collection to monitor community outcomes pertaining to its goals. After the initial development of benchmarks and action plans, the coalitions in the third year began streamlining their benchmarks to 10 key indicators and prioritizing one or two coalition projects per year. The professional coordinator from the University attended each coalition meeting. However, as the project continued, discussion turned to strategies for shifting more fully to self-led coalition work.

After two years of project activity, the Steering and Advisory Committees were disbanded and replaced by a permanent Human Services Planning Cabinet. The decision to form the Planning Cabinet in 2003 was borne out of a series of facilitated, joint Steering and Advisory Committee meetings, and research conducted by the University that introduced members to the experiences and best practices of similar community-wide planning initiatives succeeding across the nation (Perkins, 2002). The Steering and Advisory Committees, with input from the coalitions, decided on a governing structure that included representatives from the community's social service funders (i.e., city and county governments, the United Way staff and business volunteers, and several local foundations), social service agency representatives, and other key community agencies (i.e., county health department, Women's Com-

mission). The Cabinet would provide direct communication with the coalitions. A conceptual model that was helpful was that of a human services equivalent of the governmental commissions or councils that govern land use (e.g., planning commissions or zoning boards).

Over the four years of the project, coalitions shaped much of the ongoing community planning and implementation—both through coalition-led action and through coalition reports to the Planning Cabinet. It was anticipated that coalition members would develop, over time, a common vision for services, organizational arrangements, and delivery systems. By working together, it was hoped coalition members would figure out ways to share services and work-force personnel, and combine strategically to acquire more resources and create certain economies of scale. Activity in one area would have the potential to create a foundation for future collaboration. Overall, it was hoped that participation in the coalitions would lessen, or begin to lessen, issues associated with turf and control.

### ***THE RESULTS OF ENGAGEMENT: IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN SERVICE COMMUNITY***

Before we present some of the positive outcomes of C-SIP, it is also important to mention that not everything about this more collaborative community-planning approach was positive or uncomplicated. There was always some “stickiness” in aspects of the cooperative process, even if most of the ultimate outcomes appear to represent an improvement over the traditional uncoordinated system of isolated community service planning, implementation, and monitoring. It has been difficult to prove in the short term the value of the investment required to launch the C-SIP process. It took approximately \$200,000 (cash and University in-kind contributions) to conduct the process. Additional in-kind dollars from the various social service agencies, community groups, and governmental participants was valued at over \$60,000. Thus, C-SIP required a large investment of time and financial resources for what is inherently a rather slow process focused on long-term outcomes, without significant immediate impacts to report. Getting service providers and funders with differing interests to work cooperatively is an accomplishment and a necessary step for true collaboration, but it is not an outcome that lends itself to showcasing as a project impact. Furthermore, broad-based participation in community-wide planning and implementation requires a lot of process, which can prove difficult for participants

concerned about the dollars and hours taken from more concrete or immediate services. The process also struggled with the difficulty of communication gaps, especially since the initiative involved the creation of a whole new community infrastructure.

*Outcomes-based evaluation.* The University encouraged the incorporation of formal evaluative processes into many aspects of the C-SIP community partnership, and the process as a whole expanded the planning and evaluative focus from narrow program or agency outputs to community outcomes. Most importantly, each of the community coalitions developed an action plan that included outcome goals and action strategies. The plans also included measurable benchmarks to help determine progress. The development of a benchmarking infrastructure, including benchmark data collection, became a key component of the project. Baseline measures were established and data were collected to assess the progress made toward achieving measurable outcomes. Because this took place in the collaborative setting of the coalitions, it allowed participants to move beyond their individual agency perspective to coordinated community goals and measurements, and beyond program outputs to community impact outcomes.

Most recently, a qualitative evaluation of the project has been conducted in order to capture a better understanding of the unintended consequences and incidental learning experiences that come out of the process and would be helpful for future associations. This evaluation process—which is taking place as of this time and is being conducted by an independent evaluator from the community without ties to either the University, United Way, government, or the human services agencies—will better identify best practices, positive relational outcomes, and difficulties in order to intentionally and effectively build on lessons learned.

*Transportation coalition—community surveys.* A co-chair of the transportation coalition was a university faculty member whose perspective was influential in leading the group to decide to begin their work through two surveys. The professor connected the coalition to her political science class and had her students develop and conduct one survey—making use of student resources—while providing students with invaluable experience. Students surveyed the city shuttle service to determine how it might be re-routed. The survey became an important part of the coalition's background information used to contextualize their planning.

The transportation coalition conducted a second survey assessing specialized transportation provided in the community, such as transpor-

tation for elderly and youth, nonprofit vans, and others. The committee developed the survey to assess whether a coordinated transportation system with a central dispatcher would better utilize available vehicles. A year later, local foundations began contributing funding to move the coordinated transportation system forward. A local nonprofit and the city/county transportation service together hired a staff person to begin coordinating the system.

*Report on economic impact of human services.* As part of the C-SIP effort, a study was conducted (by a health economist from the University) to determine the economic impact of the human services sector on the economy. The study showed that, directly and indirectly, a job in human services virtually leads to another job in a separate sector in the community (the exact figure is 3/4 of a job), human service jobs account for slightly over 3% of jobs in the community, income earned in human services accounts for 2.6% of the community's total income, and spending due to human services accounts for 2.1% of the community's total economic output (Chen & Rasmussen, 2004). This study is another example of how a university can contribute to a United Way, both in conceiving the research as well as conducting it. The outcomes of the study will help the United Way (and other policymakers) to strengthen its mission and describe its impact in the community.

*Development of coordinated information and referral database for 2-1-1.* One of the leading public policy priorities of the United Way of America is the promotion of 2-1-1, the three-digit dialing code for health and human services. Locally, the United Way had participated in and supported efforts for a local 2-1-1, but lack of funding and the inability to share database information stymied meaningful progress. The University worked with the local United Way as well as the United Way in a larger community (Omaha) to develop a project that assists in database sharing. The project received funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce. Now Nebraska's United Ways will work along with a host of other national and local organizations and private software vendors, to create the computerized standards and tools necessary to share information across proprietary software programs. The statewide agreements and processes initiated as a part of this project have led to increased cooperation across the state, and local and statewide 2-1-1 databases will be established in Nebraska in the near future.

*Development of MIS system to track community data against benchmarks.* Precipitated by a new U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirement to track data for homelessness services, the United Way and the City of Lincoln funded the University

to lead the development of an information management system and to train those who would be its end users. The system was designed not only to satisfy HUD requirements, but also to capture some of the benchmark data measures established by C-SIP. It has the potential to be expanded to all United-Way funded agencies, and, ultimately, the system will benefit not only homeless providers, but all the coalitions in the University-United Way project.

*The Wilder Survey and evaluating C-SIP group process.* In the second year, the University began conducting regular evaluations of the C-SIP process using the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (Wilder Research Center, 2001). The principal concerns identified by the Wilder survey—lack of coalition momentum and lack of funding/resources to implement coalition plans—generated new plans and capacity-building to improve the next round of community planning.

*Leveraging resources.* Universities are in a powerful position to leverage and reinvest the resources that communities invest in them. The C-SIP initiative has been no exception. For example, in just the behavioral health arena alone, the County Human Services Administrator estimates that nearly \$4 million new federal dollars have been received in large part because of the behavioral health coalition that emerged as part of the C-SIP project. The coalition was able to quickly and effectively come up with a community-wide substance abuse plan that served as the basis for a large federal grant that provides service dollars. The University became a successful lead applicant for federal funds that provide for improving the behavioral health infrastructure across the state by linking faith-based and community-based resources and volunteers to the professional behavioral health system. This infrastructure will directly benefit all stakeholders in the behavioral health coalition, and it would not have been possible for any individual stakeholder to create such a system.

*Consensus-based fund allocation.* In recent years United Ways, including the United Way of Lincoln/Lancaster County, have moved from an agency-based funding strategy (i.e., granting totally discretionary dollars to agencies based on the sum total of their work) to a program-based funding strategy (i.e., granting dollars to specific programs to support only the work of those programs). The C-SIP project provided the platform to move allocations to the next step—one of granting dollars to support community impact, consistent with the national trend of United Ways away from funding programs and projects and toward funding those activities with community impacts. In October of 2001, the United Way officially adopted the priority service area definitions

developed by the C-SIP coalitions, and required applicants to indicate how their efforts fit with the priority areas and coalition action plans.

In 2003, United Way of Lincoln/Lancaster leadership and University faculty took things another step further by devising a consensus-based model of fund allocations (see Shank, Mahoney, Rupp, & Tomkins, 2004). The new model involved agency representatives and community volunteers collaboratively making funding allocation decisions and was designed to create a shared understanding of the community and community-endorsed planning to develop funding priorities. Two fund distribution teams piloted the new process. Although the consensus-based approach did not yield the clear results hoped for, the willingness of United Way to try a new practice represents the kinds of innovations that can evolve through a University partnership.

### **CONCLUSION**

The community services initiative, with its holistic approach to community-university partnership and community planning, generated a number of positive outcomes. The examples presented here are only a few of the kinds of productive outcomes that are likely to result from United Way collaborations with universities. The process fostered relationship-building among university, United Way, government, and numerous other entities, which in turn led to the incorporation of evidence-based practices into planning and implementation, collaborative resource development, and comprehensive community planning. While not yet sharing personnel and services on an intense level, the collaborative partners are sharing information, streamlining duplicative meetings, developing collaborative grant efforts, reaping the benefits of grants based on evidence of collaborative planning and communication, creating economies of scale in community trainings, and beginning to lessen turf and control issues.

The community services project has benefited from access to university-wide resources through a single university center with the express purpose of coordinating public policy and applied research activities. As Stanton (2003) noted, "it is unlikely that effective community-based collaboration among departments and schools will take place if campuses do not have a central office or program for community partnerships and service" (p. 17).



The advantages are mutual, not just one-way. United Ways open the doors for university faculty, staff, and students to access research opportunities and create effective partnerships. United Ways are extraordinarily adept at fund-raising, a skill not often found across university communities.

Both United Ways and universities have a mutual interest in outcomes and impacts. In developing measurement outcomes for C-SIP, the University of Nebraska provided guidance in designing the outcome measures, collected primary and secondary data, and conducted the data analyses. The United Way, as long-term human services actor, brought community resource knowledge and a vision for the goal of community-wide planning and implementation. The United Way, as a funder, embraced the work of the coalitions as part of its internal funding process. It is difficult to overstate the significance of the United Way's decision to base funding decisions on the results of the coalitions' work: This gave what some might have derisively regarded as a useless exercise in planning, actual impact. United Way agencies and community volunteers are using the project results to fundamentally change the community's funding priorities and process. Ultimately, this change is intended to make a difference in the lives of those in need in the community.

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