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Understanding our Community's Needs

2010 Community Needs Assessment



Moving Forward

United Way of Central New York looks forward to robust community discussions about the issues identified in the 2010 Community Needs Assessment. The data collected during the assessment will help shape the funding parameters for the 2011–2014 Community Program Fund.

The funding application process is in two parts. It begins with the Fiscal & Management Review, in which an agency's financial soundness and management capacity is evaluated. Applications for the Fiscal & Management Review will be available in July 2010 and will be due August 20, 2010. Decisions made by October 29, 2010.

Agencies that successfully pass the Fiscal & Management Review will be invited to submit proposals for program funding. Each program may apply for funding in any one of the four Focus Areas. Program reviews are due by December 17, 2010. Decisions for program funding will be based on program quality and made by May 27, 2011.

This summary report and the complete 2010 Community Needs Assessment is available for download at www.unitedway-cny.org. The application for funding will also be available on our website beginning in July 2010.

Questions about the following should be directed to United Way of Central New York's Community Impact Division, 315.428.2211:

- The 2010 Community Needs Assessment report
- Applying for program funding
- Volunteering to be part of the Allocations Process

Stewardship of donor gifts is central to the mission of United Way of Central New York. Donors choose United Way to have the greatest impact with their gifts, creating lasting improvements in people's lives and changing our community for the better. As a cornerstone of United Way stewardship, every three years we begin a new funding process that is conducted in phases:

1. **NEEDS ASSESSMENT** Explore the current needs of the community and develop goals for improvement
2. **ALLOCATIONS** Invest in the very best programs to work toward these goals
3. **MONITORING AND REPORTING** Achieve and report measurable results

This report provides an overview of the 2010 Community Needs Assessment

The complete 2010 Community Needs Assessment report is available on our website at www.unitedway-cny.org.

What did we learn?

Teens told us they want jobs and the skills to get hired.

“I need to make money to help my family out with their bills.”

During their working lives, typical college graduates earn 60% more than typical high school graduates. Those with advanced degrees earn 2-3 times as much as high school graduates. In Onondaga County, 2008 Census data estimated a high school diploma was the highest education level for 26.3% of adults.

The number of people living in the city of Syracuse whose income was below the federal poverty line (\$17,033 for a family of three) jumped from 17.5% to 29.7% from 2007 to 2008, according to the data. Onondaga County also saw an increase from 8.3% to 11.7%.

People using community services told us they need more help, and closer to home.

“More services...where I can get to them.”

A 2009 study by Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger relief charity, details the challenges facing many American families. Many clients reported their household incomes did not cover basic expenses for such things as food and utilities.

When asked to compare their current situation to three years ago, 37% of surveyed clients of a United Way-funded agency said their financial situation was worse than before and 28% said their emotional situation was worse. They named multiple reasons why, such as family responsibilities, disabilities, debt, and the inability to get the help they need.

Community experts told us more people are seeking help.

“When economic development is spiraling downward, the need for support increases.”

New York State lost 245,000 private sector jobs between 2008 and 2009. The state's average annual unemployment rate climbed from 5.3% in 2008 to 8.4% in 2009, its highest level since 1992. Onondaga County's unemployment rate rose to 8.3% in January 2010. That's 24% higher than five years ago in January 2005.

About 48% of the United Way Program Participant Survey respondents indicated they were unemployed at the time they took the survey. About 62% indicated that their annual household income was between \$15,000 and \$24,999, making it difficult for people to meet their needs.

Community members told us our most vulnerable citizens, such as children and seniors, need more help.

“The very young and the elderly need the most help because often they can't physically and/or mentally care for themselves.”

Senior adults with no family or social connections are often isolated and at risk for physical and mental health disorders, according to Onondaga County's Office of Aging and Youth. Locally, 13.8% of our population is estimated to be aged 65+.

In 2008, the federal poverty level for a family of three was \$17,033. Research indicates children living in poverty are likely to have difficulty in school, to become teen parents, and earn less as adults. The 2008 Census estimate shows 13.9% of children in Onondaga County and 39.9% in Syracuse living in poverty.

2010 Community Needs Assessment

This summary report was developed to introduce the community to the rationale and strategy for our funding investments in the 2011-2014 Community Program Fund.

Our new funding model will feature a standardized reporting system in which programs will measure and report on specific, pre-defined outcomes and indicators. Under the new system it will be possible to not only track improvements made in individual lives, but also community-level improvements over time.

The research process

The goal of this research was to gain insight into current conditions and trends in Onondaga County and frame what we learned within regional, national and historic contexts. The study included four main components:

BACKGROUND RESEARCH included local, state and national data such as unemployment rates, population trends, educational attainment, and income data.

SURVEYS of four different groups were distributed to more than 13,000 community members targeting:

- Community experts in such fields as human services, higher education, and school districts
- Clients of agencies receiving United Way funding
- Teenagers from across Onondaga County
- Community at-large, including United Way donors

BEST PRACTICE REVIEW looked at funding systems of similar-sized United Ways and United Way Worldwide's Advancing the Common Good framework that supports work in the areas of EDUCATION, INCOME, and HEALTH.

SELF ASSESSMENT Our current funding structure was reviewed to ensure it aligned with the findings of the assessment.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY In the past, the needs assessment was conducted in partnership with a paid consultant. To save money, United Way's Board of Directors determined that this assessment could be successfully conducted by staff and volunteers. This gave us greater access to the data resulting in a richer understanding of the community. For additional savings, we will print the report in-house and have made it available online at www.unitedway-cny.org.

Best-practice funding models

The United Way Worldwide funding model has been successfully adopted by a number of United Ways across the country. As a benefit of adopting this model, United Way will be able to track national and regional trends and improvements over time. In this community however, there is a need for continued support of basic needs services for people in crisis. Therefore, United Way of Central New York has added SAFETY NET to the 2011-2014 Focus Areas.

What the research showed

The economy has changed the landscape of need

The troubled economy has played a central role in redefining the community's areas of greatest need. Onondaga County residents are having a harder time meeting their basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. More people need help, and people need more help. Many individuals and families face multiple challenges that touch all facets of their lives. Consider:

- Of those housing units rented in Onondaga County, it is estimated that 38.3% of the units cost the renters 35% or more of their household income.
- A Food Bank of Central New York study found that a significant percent of client households had to choose between paying for food and:
 - Utilities/heating fuel, 41%
 - Rent or mortgage, 42%
 - Medicine/medical care, 25%
- With unemployment at record highs, the most inexperienced job seekers are finding it especially difficult to get work. United Way Teen Survey respondents reported the following challenges:
 - "No one's hiring," 41.5%
 - "No experience," 30.4%
 - "Not enough education," 11.2%
- Experts are concerned the depressed economy can have consequences detrimental to families and individuals. Of the 28% of United Way Program Participant Survey respondents who indicated their emotional state was worse than it was three years ago, 66.3% cited financial difficulties as the cause for the decline.

"Family financial failures have both personal and societal costs. Certainly the additional stress on family members and family relationships is detrimental to overall health. And, there is a correlation between family violence and family stresses such as financial problems."

American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences

Our 2011-2014 Focus Areas

As a result of what we learned, United Way of Central New York will organize its funding for the 2011-2014 Community Program Fund around four Focus Areas.

EDUCATION	INCOME	HEALTH	SAFETY NET
Educate people to help them achieve their full potential.	Advance financial stability and economic self-sufficiency.	Improve people's overall well-being.	Provide for the community's basic needs.
<i>Supports programs such as:</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services to help children, teens and young adults succeed in school Education / awareness of community issues Improving child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive services toward economic independence Job placement and retention Stable housing Financial education Planning for a financial crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services to combat violence and drug activity Mental health services Character/civic development Senior programming Abuse prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency rent/mortgage/utility assistance Food pantries and meal programs Disaster assistance Crisis management skills
<i>Examples of outcomes and indicators (outcomes are desired results, indicators are measures of progress)</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome: Children and youth make progress towards age-appropriate physical, emotional, social and cognitive skills at major developmental milestones Indicator: # and % of children and youth will be socially and emotionally adjusted and ready for school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome: Individuals attain job readiness/retention skills Indicator: # and % of individuals will develop a career or vocational plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome: Seniors increase their personal safety / well-being Indicator: # and % of seniors who demonstrate new skills to live safely at home and/or in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome: Individuals/families in need of food receive assistance Indicator: # and % of individuals receiving food assistance



"We're not about a 'hand out' but 'leg up.'"

Community Expert Survey respondent