



## Community Planning Process Frequently Asked Questions

### United Way of Douglas County

#### ***1. What is different? Why?***

The United Way of Douglas County has defined three broad priorities that it believes are critical to a positive community: education, health and self-sufficiency. The United Way, with input from community members and hard data from member agencies, will identify specific goals within these priorities and focus resources on eliminating barriers and reaching community goals. By targeting community resources on community goals, we can measure our success toward making significant changes in people's lives.

#### ***2. Is this part of a national trend?***

Yes! United Ways across the country have shifted their focus to addressing specific community goals. Participating United Ways, with support from the United Way Worldwide, have experienced great success utilizing this approach. For example, the United Way of Dane County in Madison, Wisconsin, focused on reducing the achievement gap in education. Over a nine year period that gap was reduced from 29% to 8%. You can visit their web site to see more.

[www.unitedwaydanecounty.org](http://www.unitedwaydanecounty.org).

#### ***3. In the past, United Way asked service agencies to define the nature of community need. Why change this practice?***

Under the current model, United Way's partner agencies effectively defined the need for the target population that they serve. With this new model, the United Way has the opportunity to engage people from throughout the community, from clients and donors to subject matter experts, to effectively define the need with a community-wide lens. This will allow our partner agencies who are improving lives daily to focus on that service while United Way focuses on the larger community picture.

#### ***4. What is the structure of the planning process?***

United Way board of directors is seeking information from a variety of sources. Like a "three-legged stool" each stream of information will offer a different perspective and provide insight into the needs of our community. The first "leg" will be information gleaned from a communitywide survey which is designed to get a broad perspective of community priorities. The survey will be available online and anyone who wishes to provide their perspective is encouraged to participate. The second "leg" will come from focus groups. Participation in focus groups will be by invitation to insure feedback from a diverse segment of our community. Focus groups allow for a more in-depth analysis of community priorities. The third venue for information will be community data: health, education and economic indicators that describe our community. Once all this information is compiled, the United Way board of directors will use it to identify funding priorities that will have the greatest impact on the community.

**5. Will some current agencies no longer receive funding?**

Until the community planning process is complete and goals have been identified, it is difficult to say. In all likelihood, it will result in this. Many of our current partners will have programs that fit within United Way's priorities. Some partners will need to track their program outcomes differently or slightly modify components of existing programs to better target the goals. Some partners will want to focus on their own agency priorities and will not seek United Way funding to do so.

**6. What is the timeline for this?**

Planning will occur in 2010, goals will be finalized in 2011 and will frame the funding decisions in 2012. Three-year funding will begin on a staggered basis and the first complete funding cycle will end in 2017 at which time United Way will assess progress toward the goals, reaffirm or adjust the goals and continue to move ahead. This work for United Way is not short term, it is critical to our mission of addressing human service needs by mobilizing resources and building partnerships.

**7. What kinds of goals might be possibilities?**

Education: Children are entering school with all the tools they need to succeed.

Health: People with chronic physical and mental health problems reduce use of crisis health services.

Self-Sufficiency: People have food and housing and are able to save for the future.

**8. Where can I learn more?**

Visit our website at [www.unitedwaydgco.org](http://www.unitedwaydgco.org).