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Advancing Knowledge.
Transforming Lives.

Using an Outcome-Asset Impact Approach in a United Way Setting

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A Convergence of Ideas

- The need to alter UW of Mason County's fund distribution process
- UW of America's advocacy for Community Impact United Way
- The trend toward asset and outcome approaches

Working Within the Convergence

- We need knowledge that allows us to take action
- Actionable knowledge:
 - Illuminates strategies
 - Specifies managerial skills to carry out the strategies (knowledge)
 - Specifies the conditions that must be created in the organization

~ Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*

Actionable Knowledge

Actionable knowledge comprises of underlying theories, and practical tools and methods derived from these theories

- *Theory*: A fundamental set of propositions about how the world works which has been subjected to repeated tests and in which we have gained some confidence
- New theories penetrate into the world of practical affairs when they are translated into methods and tools
 - *Method*: A set of systematic procedures and techniques for dealing with particular types of issues or problems
 - *Tool*: What you make, prepare, or do with

Why We Think A Framework Matters

Those interested in positive community change need a unified framework for:

- Knowing where we are
- Knowing where we're going
- Managing the journey
- Organizing complexity
- Making decisions about where to start
- Interconnecting research and practice
- Increasing capacity



The Outcome Asset-Impact approach is a framework that allows us to produce and organize actionable knowledge

What Is an Outcome-Asset Approach?

- A conceptual framework:
 - Fits the scale and complexity of initiatives
 - Whether large or small, initiatives need a framework to incorporate the pieces
- A process:
 - Organizes complexity into a manageable whole

Core Concept: Outcomes

- Benefits to people:
 - New knowledge
 - Increased skills
 - Changed attitudes or values
 - Modified behavior
 - Improved condition
 - Altered status

Core Concept: Assets

- Assets are strengths (such as positive relationships) and resources (such as skills and opportunities) that promote well-being
- Asset approaches stress that for positive change to occur we must build upon existing assets (of people and organizations)
- Asset approaches focus both on strengths and problems because the conditions that create problems are not the same as those that create well-being

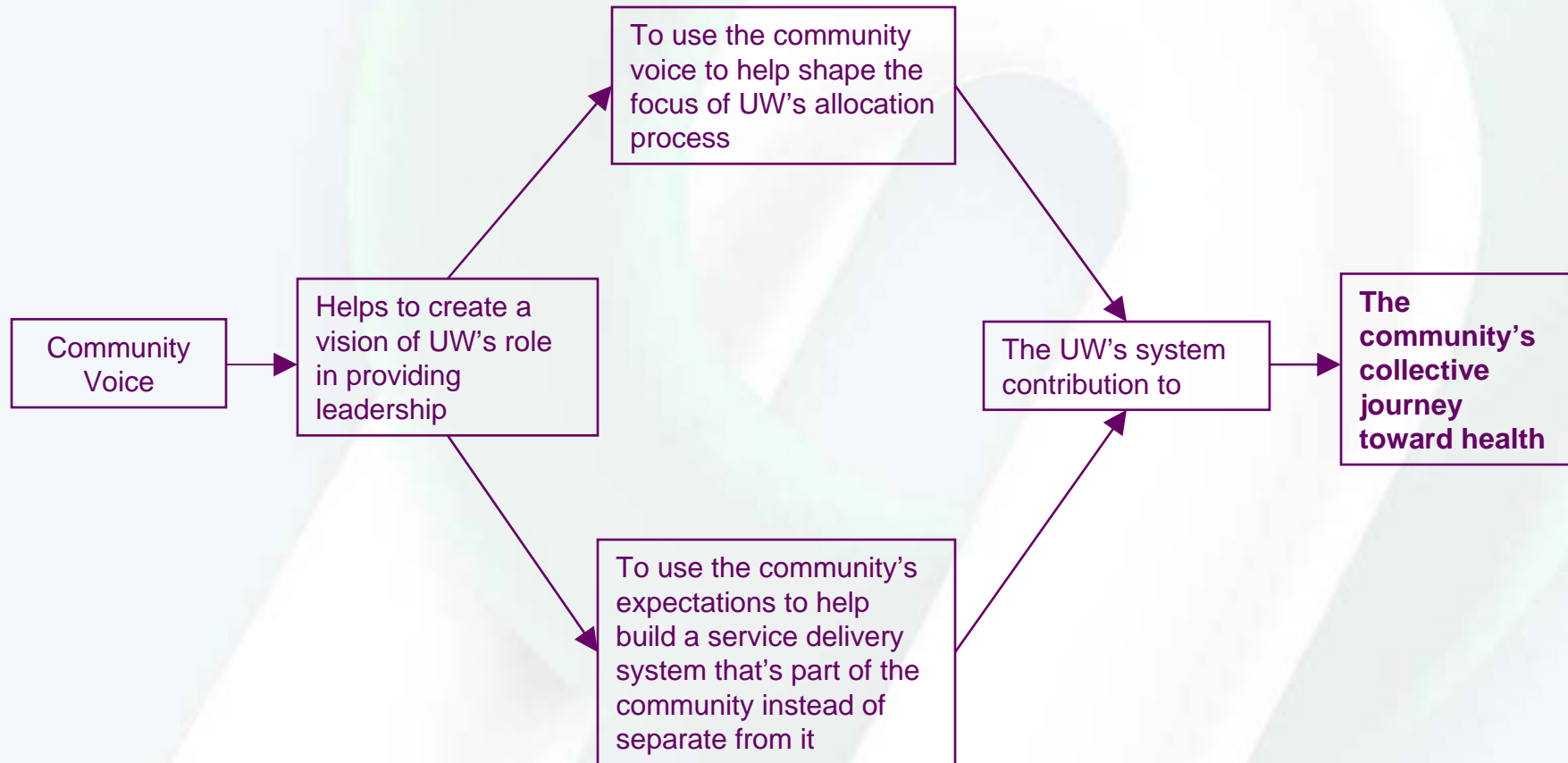
Health Care

- **Thriving:**
 - Established with health care professionals
 - Covered by comprehensive insurance
 - Practices preventative health & fitness habits
- **Safe:**
 - Can get medical care when needed
 - Insurance covers partial cost of care, can make arrangements to pay balance
 - Sound, basic health, fitness, hygiene practices; seeks timely treatment
- **At-risk:**
 - Can't always get medical care
 - Not covered by insurance, inadequate income
 - Doesn't care for self, ignores health and fitness problems

Core Concept Levels

- Individual
- Family or group
- Block or organization
- Neighborhood or service delivery system
- Community

Key Practice: Building on People's Common Sense



Healthy Community's Committee Application of the Outcome-Asset Impact Approach

- Brought in the community voice via cluster groups
- Summarized cluster group findings (themes)
- From the themes, developed a picture of the “ideal or preferred” United Way
- Compared current United Way to the “ideal” United Way
- Recommended plan to transition to the “ideal” United Way

Cluster Session Goals

1. To identify themes the participants believe represent a healthy, vibrant community
2. To involve recipients in identifying what they need
3. To get input on resource allocations
4. To begin a community discussion of the best role for UW, business and government
5. To have participants identify what actions they think represent movement toward a healthy community

Cluster Groups

A non-representative sample of:

1. Retirees
2. Service recipients
3. Ludington residents
4. Business and education
5. Member agencies
6. Other agencies
7. Government
8. Eastern Mason County
9. Youth

Questions Asked

1. What are the characteristics of a “strong, healthy community”?
2. Which of these is particularly strong in Mason County now? What’s right?
3. In which of these is Mason at risk?
4. What do you think human service agencies should do to promote a healthy Mason?
5. What should UW’s role be?

Major Cluster Themes

- Economic vitality
- Environmental well-being
- Community well-being
- Developmental assets for youth
- Assets for older adults
- Physical health

Areas Important to Participants

- A first class educational system
- A feeling of community
- A beautiful environment
- A strong economy
- An active place for all
- Available transportation

Participant Views of Current Strengths

- People are good to one another
- Sections of the medical community are strong
- Sections of the educational system are strong
- Individual human service organizations are effective
- The community is safe

Participant Views of Areas At Risk

- The economic base
- Poverty
- Feeling of “us/them”
- Limited collaboration
- Poor health behaviors

Populations “At Risk” per Participants

- Low income, particularly the working poor
- Families, particularly younger families in poverty and single parents
- Youth, particularly teens, 10 and up, 17 year olds
- Seniors, particularly those who could be at home, those isolated
- Homeless people and those in substandard housing

Role of Agencies and Government

- Improve communications
- Expand services
- Involve people
- Provide a regional vision
- Deal with resistance to change

Views of UW's Role

- Create a collective vision
- Shift funding to focus on making a difference, across organizations, across geographical areas and with new distribution methods
- Break down barriers
- Educate
- Help organizations and people connect

Step: Translate Community Voices into a Vision of the Ideal United Way

1. Determine United Way's role in achieving the community voices session themes
2. Determine the type of role—funding, facilitating, mobilizing, other
3. Based on steps 1&2, develop a description of the ideal or preferred United Way

Ideal Vision of United Way

- Focuses on achieving positive outcomes for healthy youth, adults, and families, and maintaining healthy elders
- Positive outcomes achieved through funding, facilitating and mobilizing community resources and efforts
- Facilitating and mobilizing role will help clarify and define the funding role
- Key issues include:
 - Economic health of individuals and families
 - Practice of healthy behaviors, including preventative health practices
 - Availability of adequate and affordable housing

Ideal Vision of United Way

- Funded organizations are efficient and effective
- Funded organizations focus on:
 - Involving the client/consumer
 - Improving communication
 - Coordinating services with other organizations

Ideal Vision of United Way

- Service delivery systems of funded organizations are efficient and effective. These systems focus on:
 - Reducing turfism
 - Increasing cooperation
 - Increasing interconnections between organizations
 - Working together to achieve better client/consumer outcomes
- United Way of Mason County supports outcome accountability and improved models for doing business

Ideal Vision of United Way

- United Way supports these visions of the ideal through facilitating and mobilizing community resources and efforts which help define specific funding actions (this includes, but is not limited to, programs/initiatives)

Step: Compare Current United Way Operations to the Picture of the Ideal United Way

- Currently, member agencies focus on measuring program outcomes they define, making it difficult to see the connection to larger, community-defined issues
- United Way has facilitated the defining of issues and the mobilizing of financial resources for specific projects; however, this currently is not a major focus
- United Way funds some programs that narrowly focus on the economic health of individuals and families and affordable housing; no funding is provided for preventative health

Step: Develop Plans to Transition to the Ideal United Way

- Values that close the gap between current United Way practice and the ideal vision of United Way:
 - Prevention strategies are key to a healthy community
 - To build a healthy community, action must focus on the roots of individual and family healthiness
 - Raising healthy children gives us communities of healthy adults and families
 - Responsible living through personal accountability is an important attribute of individuals and families in a healthy community
 - Unhealthiness is not confined to a particular socioeconomic class in the community

Step: Develop Plans to Transition to the Ideal United Way

- Values that close the gap between current United Way practice and the ideal vision of United Way:
 - Solely focusing on need enables decline; a life span model helps us move beyond need to focus on the building blocks of healthy individuals and families
 - United Way should work along the entire continuum of a life span model, which ranges from one-shot, simple engagement to complex engagement over the long haul
 - People who are “in need” or “at-risk” need experiences that build self-esteem
 - Mentors and role models help to build strengths in people
 - When problems surface in the community, the solution is not always another program or a new agency

To Close the Gap between Current United Way Practice and the Ideal Vision of United Way

1. United Way should act as a community mobilizer to connect those who want to help with those who need help through various avenues and approaches
2. United Way should mobilize people around key community issues to generate a full spectrum of responses:
 - This full spectrum ranges from non-funded, volunteer solutions to funded interventions
 - Development of a full spectrum approach should guide the strategic use of United Way funding
 - Funded initiatives should not be United Way's first response

To Close the Gap between Current United Way Practice and The Ideal Vision of United Way

3. United Way should use its strengths, such as expertise in fundraising, in new and innovative ways. For example, the United Way annual campaign also collects pledges/donations of volunteer hours
4. United Way's role in the community should move beyond meeting basic needs



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