

How Agencies May Contribute to Community-change Strategies

While every traditionally funded agency or program will not be part of community impact work, many can add value in meaningful ways – especially if you and they think creatively about how to leverage their expertise, research, networks, and other assets. Given the opportunity, agencies can tell you about activities and areas of expertise relevant to the work that you may not have been aware of. Among the contributions that agencies may make to a broader effort to improve lives by changing community conditions are:

★ Provide perspectives, research, and ideas – their own and others’ – to issue identification and strategy development. *For example:*

- Agencies/programs serving a population of concern can offer insights about recurring challenges particular client groups face, fundamental community barriers to client success, or ways to overcome underlying community issues. (See *Connecting Program Outcome Measurement to Community Impact* at <https://online.unitedway.org/POM-CI>.)
- Health and human service agencies can identify both potential needs for assistance and resources available to share as part of community disaster response planning.
- Agencies serving teens can ask youth clients to provide first-hand knowledge on the underlying causes of gang violence.

★ Take ownership of planning and implementing a component of a strategy. *For example:*

- Agencies/programs serving low-income families can form a food policy council to identify, plan, and coordinate responses to obstacles these families face in acquiring emergency food.
- Health care providers can develop and participate in a shared electronic medical record system to increase coordination of services and reduce duplication of medical tests and prescriptions for frail elderly adults.

★ Play roles in strategy implementation. *For example:*

- Agencies/programs that provide home repair and renovation can facilitate sessions at an energy expo that helps low-income home owners learn about weatherization techniques.
- Agencies can sign on to an endorsement letter or serve on an advisory committee advocating for state/federal funding for 2-1-1.

- Agencies that provide services needed as part of a community-change strategy can offer those services in un-served areas or in settings (churches, community centers, union halls, etc.) that are familiar to the population of concern.
- Depending on their strengths and capacities, agencies may serve as leaders, coordinators, community organizers, public educators, policy advocates, fiscal agents, data providers and analysts, and resource mobilizers in comprehensive community-change strategies.

★ Tap their own networks for help in strategy implementation. *For example:*

- Agencies/programs serving pre-school children can identify parents to testify on the barriers they face and how a proposed change in local government policy would improve their lives.
- Agencies can identify members of their boards whose networks or expertise can help advance implementation of a specific strategy.

★ Adopt and test service-delivery practices shown to be effective elsewhere. *For example:*

- Agencies/programs working to increase early literacy among children at risk of poor academic performance can adopt research-based service-delivery practices and test them through program outcome measurement.

★ Link members of the population of concern with resources and opportunities generated by the strategy. *For example:*

- Agencies/programs serving low-income families can refer them to Food Stamp and energy assistance programs, food pantries, and VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) sites promoting the earned income tax credit (EITC).
- Food pantries can encourage individuals receiving emergency food assistance to contact 2-1-1 for other resources and can provide access to a telephone for this purpose.

Find more resources on maximizing agency relationships for community impact at <http://online.unitedway.org/AgencyRelations>.