

UNITED WAY FAITH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP GUIDE

RECRUITING ONE MILLION VOLUNTEER READERS, TUTORS AND MENTORS

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

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LIVE UNITED



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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 125 year history of the United Way movement, people from many different walks of life have come together to advance the common good. United Way's roots trace back to a diverse group of faith leaders who came together to leverage their community's collective resources and change the lives of those in need. Today, United Way continues to recruit people and organizations who bring passion, expertise and resources to improving lives. Often these people and organizations come from faith communities spanning a variety of religious traditions and customs. The creation of this Faith Community Partnership Guide stems from our 2018 goal to cut the U.S. high school drop-out rate in half. As part of the LIVE UNITED campaign, United Way launched a national call to recruit one million volunteer readers, tutors and mentors. Research shows that caring adults working with students at every stage of their education – from the early grades to graduation – makes a big difference.

We know that communities of faith share our belief that every child deserves the building blocks for a good quality of life. There is a long tradition of faith communities helping students and their families succeed. In many places, especially in the neighborhoods that surround the lowest performing schools, local churches, temples and mosques are some of the most trusted and connected institutions. Over the past year, United Way Worldwide has surveyed the country and met with local and national leaders from the faith community and beyond to find the best of what's out there and find out how to do more of it. The good news is that there are outstanding examples of programs and partnerships in place already.

The purpose of this toolkit is to assist local United Ways and their partners in creating more opportunities for young people by joining forces to recruit, train and match volunteers from the faith community with students, especially students in our nation's most challenged schools.

Many local United Ways have already been working in collaboration with houses of worship. This guide is intended to provide inspiration and advice to help you expand that work. For others who are just getting started, this resource can help you and your partners with ideas for how to get started. We hope that you will find these tools, examples and strategies helpful, and encourage you to continue to share your experiences and help us spread the word.





OUR MISSION

United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good.

OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

We galvanize and connect a diverse set of individuals and institutions, and mobilize resources, to create long-term change.

ABOUT UNITED WAY

United Way Worldwide is the leadership and support organization for the network of nearly 1,800 community-based United Ways in 41 countries and territories. We advance the common good by focusing on **improving education**, helping people achieve **financial stability** and **promoting healthy lives**, and by mobilizing millions of people to give, advocate and volunteer to improve the conditions in which they live.

HOW UNITED WAY WORKS

United Way has very strong brand awareness, but not many people have a clear understanding of the work that we do beyond our highly visible workplace campaigns.

The framework below represents the bigger picture for how we work to advance the common good. It's a tool to share with community partners from the faith community to help them better understand how we operate. You can also apply the business model to your efforts to engage the faith community and others in recruiting volunteer readers, tutors and mentors.

Engage and align with the community	Create and deepen relationships with individuals and institutions	Develop strategies and focus actions	Mobilize resources	Align and execute on plans and strategies	Measure, evaluate and communicate results
<i>Turn Outward</i>	<i>Relationships Matter</i>	<i>Seek Lasting Community Change</i>	<i>Every Contribution Counts</i>	<i>Integrate Internally and Externally</i>	<i>Learn, Report, Improve</i>
Actively and regularly turn outward, using community knowledge to identify the community's pressing education, income and health issues and shape your work with partners to address them.	Engage in two-way communication with people and groups that are committed to the issue you're addressing.	Create population-level change by changing conditions in the community through collaborative strategies and implementation approaches that reflect local perspectives, data, conditions and assets.	Provide opportunities for people to support community strategies by giving, advocating and volunteering – either through United Way, on their own with your support or through your partners.	Focus the work of the entire organization on supporting the community's impact strategies as part of a coordinated community-wide effort.	Have long-term goals in place with clear indicators of short-term progress that you monitor and share regularly with the community.





Joshua DuBois, Special Assistant to President Obama and Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; Stacey Stewart, Executive Vice President, Community Impact Leadership & Learning; and Deborah Foster, Chief Diversity Officer, United Way Worldwide, at the United Way Faith Community Partnership meeting in April

THE CALL TO ACTION: RECRUITING ONE MILLION VOLUNTEER READERS, TUTORS AND MENTORS

Over the past two years, we've spent a great deal of time talking to people in communities across the country to learn more about their hopes and aspirations when it comes to education. Above all, what we've heard is that everyday people are ready to do whatever it takes to set children up for success. And while so much attention has been placed on schools, the people we heard from said again and again that while schools play an important role, communities and individuals have to step forward too.

Research proves that caring volunteers working with students of all ages have the power to help kids boost academic achievement and put young people on track for a bright future. That's why, on June 21, 2011, United Way announced its commitment to recruit one million volunteer readers, tutors and mentors to help students succeed. We are looking for one million people to join us over the next three years. Anyone with passion and commitment can help a young person achieve greater academic success.

In most communities, there are a range of opportunities for people with different interests and different schedules.

VOLUNTEER READERS

Reading with children engages them in storytelling, opens their mind and unlocks their imagination. It is a great way for volunteers to support literacy development. As a child grows, reading becomes increasingly important for understanding the world, achieving academic success and succeeding in the workforce.

VOLUNTEER TUTORS

Tutoring – instructing a child one-on-one or in small groups – has been shown to have positive effects on academic performance. The literacy and math skills that young people receive through tutoring solidify their efforts toward high school, college and career success.

VOLUNTEER MENTORS

Children and youth need more than academic supports to make it through school successfully. Mentors provide emotional support that enhances a child's self-esteem and foster self-control. Mentors also provide guidance and advice that children often don't receive otherwise.

THE NEED FOR DIVERSE MENTORS

Mentoring is a low-cost, high-impact opportunity to make a difference in a child's life. It has been proven to improve attendance rates and increase educational attainment; prevent substance abuse and reduce other negative behaviors; and lead to positive attitudes and stronger relationships with adults and other children alike. Unfortunately, research also shows that there is a tremendous need for role models and mentors, particularly for Latino and African American youth. Several scholarly and media reports issued over the past ten years have sounded the alarm to the plight of these vulnerable populations. In 2007, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) released *America's Cradle to Prison Pipeline*. The report highlights several alarming statistics that impact African American children as a whole, but more disproportionately African American males.

- An African American boy has a 1 in 3 chance of going to prison in his lifetime compared to 1 in 17 for his white male counterpart.
- Homicides represent one of the leading causes of death for African American males ages 15-19 years of age.
- 59 percent of black males in their early 30s who dropped out of school had prison records.

More recently, according to *The Condition of Education 2011*, published by the U.S. Department of Education, among Hispanic 16- to 24-year-olds in the United States, 17.6 percent were high school dropouts in 2009, compared with 9.3 percent of African Americans and 5.2 percent of whites in the same age group.

Despite the efforts of many organizations across the United States and abroad there remains a national crisis for African American male youth seeking mentors. According to a report published by the Urban Leadership Institute, mentoring programs nationwide report challenges recruiting and retaining African American mentors.

We believe communities of faith can help.

Adapted from *Man Up: Recruiting and Retaining African American Mentors* by David Miller, M.Ed., Urban Leadership Institute.
Download the full report at www.mentoring.org

“Mentoring is all about caring. It's caring enough to commit just one hour a week to advise and help guide a vulnerable young person. None of the forces claiming our children's lives are more powerful than our commitment and love. We are the solution.”

— SUSAN. L TAYLOR, FOUNDER, NATIONAL CARES MENTORING MOVEMENT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF EMERITUS, ESSENCE MAGAZINE

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE UNITED WAY NETWORK

United Way strives to be a model of diversity and inclusion, with our staff and volunteers reflecting the many faces, cultures and walks of life that make up our communities and the world. We respect, value and celebrate the unique attributes, characteristics and perspectives that make each person who they are. We also believe that bringing diverse individuals together allows us to collectively and more effectively address the issues that face our communities. It is our aim, therefore, that our partners, strategies, and investments reflect these core values.



WAYS THE FAITH COMMUNITY CAN SUPPORT THE VOLUNTEER CALL TO ACTION

THE POWER OF THE PULPIT

Just about every day of the week, faith leaders are talking to people – from small family conversations to large audiences, like weekly services and events. One of the easiest ways faith leaders can help United Way recruit one million volunteer readers, tutors and mentors is to call on their parishioners to sign up and start volunteering. In almost every community, faith leaders are influencers. Clergy (and in many cases their spouses and/or designees) can often help carry our message to the community better than any public service announcement, sign or other promotion.

SET A GOAL

Another way that faith-based organizations can support the call to action is to set a goal in support of the million volunteer effort. Whether it's a small goal – such as 10–15 volunteers – or a much larger one, it all adds up to more young people who have a caring adult in their lives to help them succeed in school and life.

To officially set a goal with United Way Worldwide, visit www.unitedway.org/volunteer and click “Pledge as an Organization or Group.” This process will allow you to create a custom page where you can send volunteers that you've helped to recruit.

The One Church, One School Model

The One Church, One School Community Partnership Program is a national network of church and school partnerships.

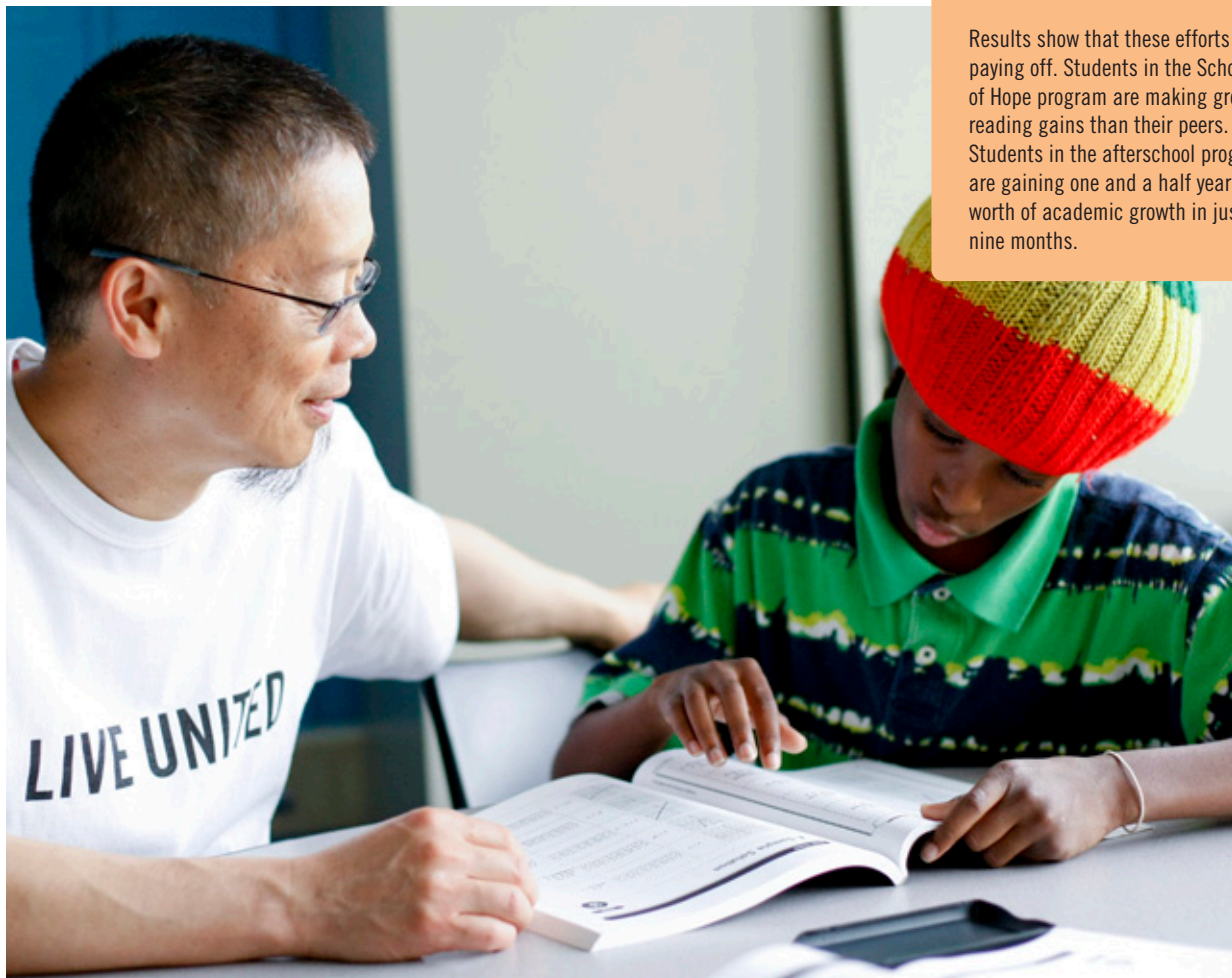
The model is simple. A church (mosque, synagogue or temple) adopts a neighboring school and provides volunteer and other resources to improve the academic achievement, social behavior and personal development of children.

Faith communities that are just getting started may want to start small – by adopting a few classrooms or a grade level. This is an excellent way to build stronger relationships with students, their families, their teachers and the broader community.

One of the best places to direct potential volunteers is United Way's website www.unitedway.org/volunteer. This site is designed to capture the interest of a potential volunteer, provide information about the types of opportunities that are out there, and connect them with an organization that can place them with a student. Local United Ways that have signed our relationship agreement are also eligible to receive the names of individuals who pledge to volunteer on the national website.

EXPAND OR IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EXISTING READING, TUTORING AND MENTORING PROGRAMS

Local United Ways and community partners can work together with faith leaders to expand in-house programs that support mentoring and student achievement. Local United Ways can often help communities of faith set up new programs and assist with evaluation of those programs. Working in collaboration with schools, other nonprofits and other faith groups can also improve overall efficiency and contribute to greater community-wide results.



SCHOOLS OF HOPE, HEART OF WEST MICHIGAN UNITED WAY – GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

The Grand Rapids community, including their school districts, have come together to help 900 young students become better readers with the Schools of Hope reading program. United Way serves as the backbone institution for this work.

More than 1,200 community volunteers, including college students and retirees, work one-on-one with students in schools for 30 minutes a week. Local churches and other faith communities also host after-school and family literacy programs. United Way provides a mix of funding and technical assistance.

Results show that these efforts are paying off. Students in the Schools of Hope program are making greater reading gains than their peers. Students in the afterschool program are gaining one and a half years worth of academic growth in just nine months.

86 percent of Americans polled in a recent United Way public opinion survey – including parents in underserved, urban communities – want communities of faith to play a greater role in helping children succeed.

THE BENEFITS OF WORKING TOGETHER

Developing strong, mutually beneficial relationships with communities of faith is fundamental to helping young people succeed in school and life. In cities like St. Louis, Grand Rapids and Orlando, United Way is teaming up with volunteers from the faith community and beyond to reach those students who need our help the most. And it's working.

Our goal to decrease the dropout rate is an excellent starting point for a conversation with faith leaders because they share the belief that all children deserve the right to a quality education, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or religious affiliation.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Some of the benefits of working together to recruit and match volunteers from the faith community with students include:

- Increased public will for school reform efforts
- Improvements in student attendance, behavior, academic performance
- Additional resources flowing into our nation's lowest performing schools
- Increased capacity to engage the entire community in improving education, especially for African American and Latino youth, who are far more likely to drop out of school.

A successful outreach program helps United Way and communities of faith find common areas of interest, map existing programs and resources, identify the gaps and create strategies to fill them. Ultimately, the goal is to work together to achieve a vision that benefits all of our children and strengthens communities.

INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS

For United Way

- Access to potential volunteers
- Access to youth at risk of dropping out of school and their caregivers
- Improved quality/results among youth development programs
- Resources: funding, space, supplies, etc.

For Schools

- Additional volunteers from the community working with students
- Increased access to additional community-wraparound supports for students
- Improved community morale towards schools

For Existing Youth Development Programs

- Increased collaboration with youth development programs
- Access to additional volunteers
- Access to student data
- Opportunities to better align service delivery with real-time student needs

For Faith Communities

- Increased capacity for existing reader, tutor or mentor programs (including funding, training, volunteers, supplies)
- Opportunities to “put faith in action” to directly improve the surrounding community in a visible way
- Increased recognition of existing community efforts
- Better connections to other faith groups and youth serving organizations, including schools and United Way

UNITED WAY OF GREATER ST. LOUIS – ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Since 2001, United Way of Greater St. Louis has partnered with the St. Louis Metropolitan Clergy Coalition, linking their congregational resources with partner agencies and the services they provide.

In 2007, United Way partnered with New Life in Christ Interdenominational Church in O’Fallon, Illinois, to adopt the East St. Louis Senior High School 9th grade class (the class of 2011).

Through the program young men and women were paired with professional adults who served as mentors to help them develop character, make better decisions, set and achieve goals and enhance educational desires. The pairs worked together throughout the students’ high school career.

In 2007, when the program began, East St. Louis High School only graduated 41 percent of its students. At the end of their junior year, the “adopted” class of 2011 showed:

- A GPA increase in 82 percent of students
- A 35 percent increase in students considering college
- An 82 percent decrease in days of suspension for drug possession
- An 81 percent decrease in days of suspension for fighting

But the most impressive gains were in the graduation rate. Ninety percent of the class of 2011 graduated. This compares to a graduation rate of 41 percent for the class of 2007. United Way and New Life Church are now offering mentoring to the class of 2014, and have created the Metro East Mentoring Cares collaboration, where three additional churches will serve elementary and middle school levels.



United Way of Greater St. Louis provides organizational capacity building (including strategic planning), consultation, documentation, program funding and, most importantly, a staff person to serve as liaison to keep the dots connected.

ENGAGE

TURN OUTWARD

The first step in mobilizing communities of faith is to turn outward. Through community conversations, one-on-one meetings and other forms of engagement, United Way must look to leaders from the faith community and beyond to cast a vision for the desired changes in the lives of students and the community at large.

The vision that you create should be something that you know people in the faith community will likely share and work towards achieving. It is very likely that religious leaders will also want to have input on the work you seek to do as partners after it is presented to them. That input should be welcomed.

As you prepare to have conversations with religious leaders and communities of faith it may be helpful to use our United Way “Community Conversations Guide” which you can find online by visiting www.liveunited.org/page/s/community-conversation-share. This is a great resource that provides information on the “how” of building successful partnerships.

The diverse perspectives religious leaders can bring to the partnership are tremendously valuable. Soliciting their input and contributions in the developmental stages will not only improve the end product, but will increase their buy-in and participation in the work. Also, the more clearly you can articulate your vision, the more likely others will be to understand it and say “I want to be a part of making that vision a reality.” Many local United Ways have already developed community strategies and approaches. If this is the case in your community, then the objective here is to find the areas of shared interest and alignment which in this case is decreasing the dropout rate for our most vulnerable children. For those that have not developed such strategies the “Community Conversations Guide” is a great place to start.

Determine where ongoing meetings will take place

If you plan to meet with a group of religious leaders on a regular basis, it is recommended that you identify a religious leader who is willing to host the meeting at his or her house of worship. Preferably, a location with parking, and someplace other clergy are accustomed to visiting.

In this partnership guide, you will find language that is inclusive and speaks to the diversity of faith traditions represented in our communities. Some of this may be new to your United Way. In the section entitled “Definition of Terms” you’ll find explanations of terminology and traditions that may be new to you.

IDENTIFY EDUCATION CHAMPIONS FROM THE FAITH COMMUNITY

As you prepare to partner with houses of worship it is important to first gather information about the various religious groups and faith traditions in your city.

When researching houses of worship as potential partners based on their work in the community, look for alignment with your local United Way's education strategy or existing work around education.

Start by answering the following question: Which faith traditions are prominent in our city? For example, is the predominant faith tradition Muslim, Buddhism, Jewish, or Christian. What Christian denominations are most prevalent?

Visiting Houses of Worship

It is a good idea to visit houses of worship prior to engaging leaders for the first time. This will give you a good sense of the size of the active congregation; their faith traditions and values; whether or not the religious leader is one who has a community service-orientation; and the connection that the house of worship has with the surrounding community (including schools). If possible have a United Way stakeholder who is a member of the house of worship join you. You may also consider bringing information about your United Way's work to leave behind.



The goal is to make sure that your outreach is inclusive of every faith tradition and denomination that is represented in your community.

EXAMPLES OF LOCAL FAITH COMMUNITY PROFILES

- **Example 1:** In Philadelphia, the Korean community is growing and from a religious perspective they tend to be more Pentecostal and conservative in nature. The Muslim community is smaller but active when it comes to education. The Jewish community is also very strong and although many of their children do not attend public schools they still have a vested interest in making sure that schools are successful. The African American community is the city's largest faith community and is very active on social justice issues.
- **Example 2:** In Detroit, the African American religious community is the largest and several are very active on issues related to education. However, Michigan also has the largest Muslim community in the country and many live in Detroit or the nearby suburbs. The Catholic community is smaller but still very active and the same for the Jewish community. Other parts of the state lean more Pentecostal and Evangelical.
- **Example 3:** In Los Angeles, the religious community is extremely diverse. There are numerous African American churches as well as large Jewish synagogues. The Unitarian and United Church of Christ communities are both very active on social justice issues. Although a number of inter-faith social justice organizations do not specifically focus on education, they do believe in and are involved in labor issues.

RESEARCH CLERGY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Once you've identified potential houses of worship with which to partner, the next step is to begin building relationships with members of the clergy. It's important to be present before you have an "ask" so that the people know you are genuinely concerned with their interests. Attending ministerial meetings allows clergy the opportunity to get to know you and become accustomed to seeing you on a regular basis before you ever ask them to do something. A good way to begin interacting with leaders from throughout the faith community is to occasionally attend weekly ministerial meetings held in most cities, typically on Mondays. Attending these meetings also provides opportunities to learn more about what the clergy are working on; their plans for the year; the individual leaders who show up consistently and are committed to the group; those who hold power either by title or prestige; and what they oppose and support individually and as a group.

Extend the invitation to visit you

It is also recommended that you invite religious leaders to the United Way office to help them to get a better understanding of who you are. The purpose is to build friendships that make the religious leaders feel comfortable and a part of the institution.

In many cities religious leaders serve on school boards, as local elected officials, teachers, and heads of other organizations both non-profit and corporate. Knowing their backgrounds can be helpful to determine what skills and talents they can bring to bear as a partner in addition to being a religious leader. Many clergy have a second job outside of their community of faith. This further broadens their sphere of influence and makes these leaders a tremendous asset.

Your United Way stakeholders may already know a number of clergy in their communities or be a part of a religious institution – making this process a lot easier. Simply circulate a quick faith outreach survey that allows members to identify religious leaders. The survey should include an opportunity for members to indicate whether or not they would be willing to introduce United Way to the religious leader and serve as a liaison. This is an excellent opportunity to engage volunteers, staff and others in new ways.

Once you have identified religious leaders who are potential partners, you need to do additional “homework” before you ask them to become a partner. Researching each person allows you to gather information on their background; history and reputation in the community; the types of issues they have supported or opposed and whether or not there are any issues of concern that could cause problems for your partnership. Research also gives you information that can be useful when you meet with clergy and can help start a conversation by bringing up positive or interesting things you learned about the person. Clergy are not offended to know that you have done your homework. It shows that you are taking them and their work seriously.

Methods for gathering information include internet searches, conversations with United Way supporters who are members of that particular house of worship, conversations with other religious leaders you have worked with, review of community newspapers and daily newspapers, community events they have sponsored or hosted and conversations with your family/friends.

It should also be noted that even if a religious leader has not been in support of United Way or education issues in the past, it does not necessarily mean that he or she should not be invited to the table as a potential partner. Meeting with these leaders allows you to clear up any misconceptions, provide good information and get a better idea of issues that you have in common.

Identify a contact person

As you begin to build relationships and meet with faith leaders individually it is important that they identify a staff member or volunteer from their community of faith who can lead the work. In most cases the religious leader is not the person you will be working with directly on a regular basis. Having him or her connect you with someone they trust to get the work done will provide greater accountability for managing your partnership with respective houses of worship.

CREATE A SHARED VISION OF SUCCESS

As you build partnerships with individual leaders and with the faith community as a whole, it is critical to establish a common vision. Partnerships are successful when the vision benefits the entire community and people outside of United Way clearly understand how their support is helping to advance the common good. Having clearly defined goals will give you a better understanding of the work that needs to be done.

In this case, our ultimate goal is helping every student succeed in school and life. There may be one or more ways United Way and faith communities can work together to recruit more volunteer readers, tutors and mentors.

Sample Goal Statement:

United Way and partner organizations will work with communities of faith and other partners to improve student performance and cut the high school dropout rate. Working together, we will recruit <insert number> volunteers readers, tutors and mentors; provide them with training and support; and work with low-performing schools to build capacity and improve student outcomes.

One way to define what success would look like is take faith and other community leaders through an exercise of developing a headline for a news article that would be featured in a newspaper. When engaging staff, volunteers and partners in this process, have them respond in writing to the following questions: “If we are successful in our work to improve the lives of young people, how would the headline read in the morning paper? Or, if you woke up one morning and saw a headline in the paper that pointed to our success, what would it say that would let you know we finally achieved our vision?”

Sample Headlines:

- “Local Volunteers from Faith Community Close the Racial Achievement Gap”
- “Faith Leaders, Schools and Nonprofits Working Together to Improve Attendance, Behavior and Academic Performance
- “United Way and Faith Communities Successfully Boost Graduation Rates”
- “Local Churches Adopt Schools and Improve Early Grade Reading”

BUILD CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

If working with the faith community is new to you, a good approach is to begin by learning about the dynamics of the faith community. As previously mentioned, the “Community Conversations Guide” provides tools on the best way to approach your work as a learner. Another great resource to consider is the United Way “Engaging Diverse Markets Guide”

If you set expectations too high in the beginning, there is the danger of viewing incremental achievements as failures.

As you build your religious community partnerships you should designate one staff person to be responsible for the program. This person will spend a significant amount of time gathering information on the religious community and doing your outreach. The faith community is more likely to stay involved in the work if they can develop a close relationship with the same person from your team. This also reduces confusion about the work, prevents duplication of work and helps United Way know exactly who is accountable for the program.

In most cases, the religious outreach program will be added work for staff. If the United Way does not have one person who can be assigned the entire responsibility of faith engagement programs, it will be important to start small and set realistic expectations for what you hope to achieve in the first year. Keep in mind that the work will be spread out amongst a number of different staff.

When building the infrastructure for ongoing sustainable relationships it is important to start with a core group of seven to ten religious leaders and increase gradually as staff time permits and schedules allow. If you set expectations too high in the beginning there is the danger of viewing incremental achievements as failures when the reality is that these are new relationships that are being built and every step in the right direction is a success. It takes time to establish trust. And it is a process. Getting religious leaders to agree to meet one-on-one, attend larger group meetings, show up for small events, etc., are victories that add significant value to building community support and establishing a foundation of trust that's needed for the future.





COLLABORATE

ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION WITH LEADERS FROM THE FAITH COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

The greatest challenge in getting people from different faiths to work together is rooted in their varying views on issues of religious doctrine. In order to succeed, it is recommended that you identify a common area of interest – such as quality education. United Way is in a good position to bring together various faith communities to LIVE UNITED. We have a rich history of bringing the right people to the table around issues of common interest and mutually beneficial results. Our work to decrease the dropout rate is something that all of us can agree needs to be done. United Way seeks to make a positive change in communities across the country by calling on people from various walks of life to work alongside us as we seek to instill the values of community. The faith community is an important group that can be tremendously influential in these efforts.

Focusing on education is a powerful way to bring people together. Uniting people around graduation rates and ensuring that every child receives a quality education can transform relationships and transcend religious affiliations. Keep in mind, however that this can still be an area of conflict for religious leaders. Issues of religious doctrine and beliefs not related to improving the lives of children through education should be avoided if possible. Ensure that meetings attended by people of different faiths adhere to a focused agenda and that issues arising from differing perspectives are addressed appropriately.

All meetings should begin with an emphasis on the goals of the group and of the meeting. It is recommended that you use language that focuses on “our children” and or “our community”. These terms speak to joint responsibility and reinforce the fact that the local United Way is not separate from the community but an integral part of the community.

For example, you may decide to open up the meeting by stating that “We are here because of our shared belief that it is important for us to work together on decreasing the dropout rate and making sure every child has a chance to succeed in the classroom.” or “We believe that quality education will allow our children and communities to thrive.”

FAITH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP DO'S AND DON'TS

Here is some relationship advice from local and national faith leaders at the United Way Faith Community Partnership Meeting in April 2012:

Do:

- Keep in touch regularly
- Share information
- Talk about the community issues and the impact the work will have on the community
- Invite clergy to attend United Way meetings and events
- Be inclusive. Make sure that you work with a very diverse group of clergy and ensure that all perspectives are heard and considered

Don't:

- Contact faith leaders only when you need their help
- Only invite clergy with name recognition or only those from large churches
- Only have members of one religion or race represented
- Lead with what's in it for United Way-Lead with helping young people and focus on the benefits to the entire community

SCHEDULE EVENTS, SUCH AS ISSUE EDUCATION BRIEFINGS AND TRAININGS

When scheduling meetings it is important that there is a diverse group of speakers or presenters. This will allow people of faith to see that they are in leadership roles as partners.

Who to Invite

1. Always seek to include two or three representatives from different faith traditions (i.e. Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, etc.).
2. Make sure there is gender diversity.
3. Include younger religious leaders in prominent roles on the agenda.
4. When planning your meeting, talk to the religious leaders what you want them to talk about; provide talking points; background information on United Way and the audience; and information about the purpose of the event.

Where to Host Meetings

It is not necessary to always host events in houses of worship because our focus is education and mentoring. Holding meetings or events in schools helps expose religious leaders to settings where children are engaged in learning. Schools are recommended because, in many instances, the religious leaders have not been to the schools. By holding events in schools, religious leaders are better able to make informed statements based on first-hand experience.

School tours are very helpful and make a great impact in educating religious leaders about the needs of students. The tour consists of a walk-through of specific schools so that the religious leaders can see the conditions of the schools and exciting things taking place. It helps stimulate ideas about ways that the faith community can get directly involved with schools, exposes them to the “culture” of schools, and provides them with a better understanding of the needs of students.

Scheduling and Meal Considerations

Be sure to pay attention to religious holidays and other important dates when working with diverse faith groups. Do not schedule meetings without consulting a religious calendar and ensure that you will be able to provide special accommodations if necessary. If you are planning on providing food at an event, keep in mind that you will need to offer a variety of food based on the religion. For example, you will need to offer kosher food for Jewish leaders or halal food for Muslim leaders. It’s always a good idea to avoid pork (or to offer poultry or fish alternatives when serving pork) and always provide a vegetarian alternative. Be sure to ask about food preferences in advance. By embracing differences, you are displaying respect.

BUILD A CALENDAR OF RELIGIOUS EVENTS

Creating a calendar of events in the religious community is extremely helpful for your planning. Not only does it allow you to determine which events you may want to attend or send a representative to, but it also allows you to target events where you may want to distribute information, host a workshop or have greater visibility.

When you are aware of larger religious community events such as conferences in your city, it is recommended that you seek an opportunity to send a representative who can do a welcome or bring greetings from United Way and briefly talk about some of United Way’s work. Conferences and large meetings in the religious community also provide you with a good opportunity to build exposure. You should inquire about opportunities to set up a table and distribute information, provide inserts for the event program, serve as a sponsoring organization and provide items that have your name and logo on them in the conference packets. Some places to look for a list of events include:

1. Faith In Public Life www.faithinlife.org
2. Gamaliel Foundation www.gamaliel.org
3. Industrial Areas Foundation www.industrialareasfoundation.org

4. Interfaith Workers Justice www.iwj.org
5. Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART) www.dart.org
6. People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO National Network) www.piconetwork.org
7. Christian Community Development Association www.CCDA.org
8. Sojourners www.sojo.net

DOCUMENT YOUR WORK

Always track your progress working in partnership with the religious community. Everything done in collaboration should be quantifiable and lead toward the achievement of the vision. Assessing outcomes from events will give you a good idea of what works and what doesn't so that you can trouble shoot along the way. You can also determine what the best use of your time is, use the information gathered to include in follow-up materials and keep track of what you have done for an end-of-year report.

When sharing United Way information at faith events, always emphasize quality over quantity. The best way to keep focused on quality over quantity is to determine from the outset what message you want participants to leave with. For example, if the subject is reading performance amongst fifth graders, then the only information they need to receive is that which is specific to fifth grade reading and the impact that mentors will have on a child's ability to read, their performance in the classroom, and the impact it will have on the future of the child and the community.

It is recommended that you limit the amount of information included in packets to those things that you definitely want them to read. Materials related to mentoring, parenting, and things anyone can do to help children learn are very popular. Remember, people tend to read the first paragraph and the last paragraph so the most important points should be succinctly stated at the beginning of a document and summed up again at the end. Try to include pictures of mentors and mentees and compelling narratives from mentees and their families explaining how they have benefited from your work together.

MAINTAIN CONSTANT CONTACT

It is always good to stay on people's mind by sharing success stories and updates on what you are doing. When you have stories from students doing well, United Way members being honored for their work, contributions that United Way has made to community projects, volunteer opportunities, etc., you should look for ways you can share this information with the faith community. It not only keeps them informed but makes them aware of what you are doing. Also consider adding faith leaders to your newsletter and press release distribution lists.

Ways to keep in touch:

- Newsletters
- E-alerts
- Phone calls
- Text messages
- Short notes on letterhead
- Quarterly church inserts
- Quarterly events



It is also important to publicly promote your partnership with the faith community. Profiling religious leaders in your newsletters, electronic messages or other forums is a great way to recognize them as partners while also highlighting your work. Tell the story of what they are doing in the community and how their ministries are making a difference in the lives of children and families. They will appreciate this type of exposure and it may prompt other religious groups to get involved in the work. This also affirms that United Way recognizes and appreciates the work they are doing.

RECOGNIZE AND REWARD THE SUCCESS OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP

Commitment to any type of partnership work is strengthened when people feel respected, appreciated and know that their contribution toward achieving the vision is valued. It is recommended that you regularly recognize and highlight the work and achievements of your partners in the religious community. Ask leaders in the faith community to work with you on an event to honor mentors and mentees. Events that highlight mentor and mentee success encourage people to keep their focus on the end goal of student achievement and help to strengthen relationships.

Although your work together may begin with mentoring and efforts to decrease the dropout rate for our most vulnerable children, allow the relationship to evolve in such a way that it allows you to consider other opportunities to meet needs in your community.

For example:

- Your work around mentoring will also allow people to support children and families by providing school supplies for students or even starting supplies for new moms initiatives. These types of efforts can either be created within communities of faith or members of a house of worship can be the recipients of items.
- When schools are closed you may work together to develop a food and nutrition summer feeding program.

GET STARTED!

One of the many lessons learned in taking on community impact work is that there will never be a perfect time or a perfect way to begin this work. The best thing you can do is pick a place to start and do it. You can pick up the phone and have a conversation with a single faith leader or you can gather all of the faith leaders in your community for a face-to-face meeting. The important thing is the end result – creating opportunities to help more children graduate from school with access to opportunities that lead to a better quality of life.



RESOURCES

UNITED WAY RESOURCES

Tools and Research Supporting the Volunteer Call to Action

Everything you need to launch or expand volunteering with young people in your community.

online.unitedway.org/volunteer

United Way Community Conversation Guide

This conversation guide, co-created by the Harwood Institute, provides helpful advice for how to “turn outward” and engage people from the faith community and beyond.

online.unitedway.org/harwood

United Way Engaging Diverse Markets Guide

This resource guide was created by the Inclusion Council for the United Way Network and its Business Resource Groups to help United Way galvanize and connect diverse individuals and institutions and to mobilize resources to create long-term social change.

online.unitedway.org/diversity

PARTNER RESOURCES

AARP Experience Corps

AARP Experience Corps is a national leader in engaging older adult tutors to improve K-3 student literacy in disadvantaged schools.

www.experiencecorps.org

Engaging and Partnering with Faith-Based Organizations in Initiatives for Children, Youth, and Families

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) builds partnerships across institutional boundaries, helping individuals and institutions tackle leadership challenges and leverage the resources of multiple partners to foster reform.

www.iel.org/pubs/sittap/toolkit_06.pdf

Faith for Change Graduation Ministry Toolkit

This toolkit gives advice for how to build and strengthen collaboration between students, parents, schools, communities, and the church to guarantee that children are making academic progress, ensuring that they earn a high school diploma in a timely manner and are prepared for post-secondary education.

www.faithforchange.org

Faith and Organizations Project

The Faith and Organization project was created to provide communities, organizations and policy makers with concrete information about how religious organizations can effectively (and legally) work with public and other institutions.

www.faithandorganizations.umd.edu/

Hearing the Call across Traditions: Readings on Faith and Service by Adam Davis

Explore the connections between faith, service, and social justice through the prose, verse, and sacred texts of the world's great faith traditions – Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and more. Drawing from diverse literary genres, religious and philosophical perspectives, and historical periods, these short and provocative readings cut to the heart of the many obstacles and joys that accompany lives devoted to faith and service.

Inspired to Serve: An Online Toolkit for Youth-Led Interfaith Action

This resource provides the rationale, practical steps, and tools needed to engage in youth-led interfaith service-learning. It draws from the lessons learned, stories, examples, and tools from a federally supported pilot project.

www.inspiredtoserve.org

Justice Sunday & Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

The Justice Sunday National Recruitment and Recognition Initiative occurs the Sunday prior to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service each January. In churches across the country, faith leaders are invited to recognize and recruit African American mentors to improve the lives of youth and adults in academic performance, transitional preparation, and many other life connections.

www.nafj.org

National Mentoring Summit

Held annually in January, the summit brings together mentoring stakeholders from across the nation and features a wide array of workshops led by seasoned experts, young people and their mentors. Topics include strategies for deepening private sector volunteerism and improving the quality of mentoring programs.

www.mentor.org

PEN or PENCIL

Founded in 2005 by the National Alliance of Faith and Justice (NAFJ), PEN OR PENCIL™ blends history, social studies, civic education, economic, and service learning standards into an experiential learning framework to inspire critical thinking, skills development, and activism by African American youth to choose the road away from prison and jail and towards a quality education.

www.penorpencilmovement.org

The Together for Tomorrow School Improvement Challenge

The Together for Tomorrow School Improvement Challenge invites schools, national service programs, higher education institutions, community-based organizations and the faith community to work together to propel improvement of our lowest-performing schools.

tft.challenge.gov

U.S. Department of Labor Job Clubs Initiative

This project, spearheaded by the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFBNP), supports the efforts of community-based and faith-based Job Clubs. Job Club programs based at churches, other religious institutions, community organizations, and more recently online, offer opportunities for young people to come together to learn about careers and how to secure employment.

www.dol.gov/cfbnp

RELIGIOUS ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Religious advocacy organizations typically focus on one or several issues at a time that impact local communities.

Many of them have chapters or local affiliates across the country.

Gamaliel

Local affiliates in the Midwest and East Coast)

www.gamaliel.org

People In Communities Organizing – PICO

Local affiliates in the Midwest, East, and South

www.piconetwork.org

Industrial Areas Foundation – IAF

Local affiliates in the Midwest and South and West Coast

www.industrialareasfoundation.org

Sojourners/Call to Renewal

No local affiliates

www.sojo.net

National Action Network

No local affiliates

www.nationalactionnetwork.net

National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference

Local affiliates across the country

www.nhclc.org

Interfaith Worker Justice

Local affiliates

www.iwj.org

Catholics United

Online advocacy and educational activities

www.catholics-united.org

Direct Action & Research Training

Network of 19 congregation-based community organizations in Florida, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Virginia

www.thedartcenter.org

Esperanza

National in scope. Education advocacy, capacity building, program development

www.esperanza.us

SPECIAL THANKS

This project would not be possible without the advice and expertise of local and national leaders from faith community and beyond. United Way Worldwide extends hearty thanks the following individuals and their organizations:

Bishop Shelton Bady
Harvest Time Church
and Evangelistic Center,
Houston, Texas

Nicole Bailey
Lutheran Volunteer
Corps

Roxana Barillas
U.S. Department of
Agriculture

Deborah Bayle
United Way of Salt Lake

Rev. Kenneth Bedell
U.S. Department of
Education

Sarah Bishop
United Way of South
Hampton Roads

Rev. Thomas Bowen
Shiloh Baptist Church,
Washington, D.C.

Rosa Castillo
Lutheran Volunteer
Corps

Rev. Tony Campbell
Heart of West Michigan
United Way

Wray Clay
United Way of Greater
St. Louis

Rev. Hector Cortez
Big Brothers Big Sisters
USA

Joshua DuBois
White House Office
of Faith-Based and
Neighborhood
Partnerships

Nancy Eubanks
General Board of Global
Ministries, United
Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Malcolm Frazier
General Board of Global
Ministries, United
Methodist Church

Chad Frey
Messiah College

**Rev. Brenda Girton-
Mitchell**
U.S. Department of
Education

Bishop Gerald O. Glenn
New Deliverance
Evangelistic Church,
Richmond, Virginia

Jamie Glenn
Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints

Rev. Gregory Gordon, Sr.
My Brethren Ministries,
Dover, Delaware

Overseer Lonnie Harris
Ecclesia Family Worship
Center, Dover, Delaware

Marian L. Heard
Oxen Hill Partners
Hope Hess
Messiah College

Elder Winton Hill
AME Delaware Churches

Kimberly House
United Way of the
Midlands

John Kelly
Corporation for National
and Community Service

Sybil Knight-Burney
Messiah College

Doris Lassiter
National Baptist
Convention

James Lindsay
Catholic Volunteer
Network

Rev. Terri LaVelle
U.S. Department of
Veterans Affairs

Eric McDonnell
United Way of the Bay
Area

Aaron Miner
Repair the World

Clay Middleton
Corporation for National
and Community Service

John Moore
United Way of Delaware

Kevin O'Brian
Jesuit Volunteer Corps

Rev. Michael O. Minor
National Baptist
Convention

Joan Nelson
Heart of Florida United
Way

Rev. Keith Norman
First Baptist Church,
Memphis, Tennessee

Nefertiti Orrin
United Way of the Mid-
South

Fr. Joe Palacios
Georgetown University

Ed Perez
Maranatha Christian
Church, Dover, Delaware

Addie Richburg*
National Alliance of Faith
& Justice

Michael Robbins
U.S. Department of
Education

Acacia Salatti
U.S. Department of
Health and Human
Services

Ben Seigel
U.S. Department of
Labor

Rev. Mark Scott
Big Brothers Big Sisters
USA

Dr. Barbara Shaw
National Council of
Negro Women

Gloria Smith
U.S. Department of
Energy

Lucille Smith
National Education
Association

Henry Stewart
Clergy Strategic
Alliances

Heidi Stevens
School Every Day!

Lester Strong
Experience Corps

Rev. Dennis Talbert
Empower Outreach

Susan L. Taylor*
National CARES
Mentoring Movement

Rev. Romal Tune*
Clergy Strategic
Alliances

Rev. Kevin Turpin
New Life Providence
Church and Life
Enrichment Center,
Norfolk, Virginia

Wanda Turpin
Norfolk Public Schools

Peter Vanacore
Christian Association of
Youth Mentoring

Arig Wageeh
Heart of Florida United
Way

Joe Welsh
United Way of Allegheny
County

**United Way Worldwide
Staff Support:**
Deborah Foster
Stacey Stewart
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Rachel Perry
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Commemorate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King by participating in the 10th Annual Observance of Justice Sunday™

Here's How You Can Be a Part of Justice Sunday™:

- ✓ Invite faith leaders in your community to spread the word about United Way's call for one million volunteer readers, tutors and mentors. Include it in sermons, bulletins and other weekly announcements. Or take it up a notch and stage a volunteer recruiting event after services.
- ✓ Organize a community meeting with leaders from the faith community and beyond to discuss working together to help more young people graduate.
- ✓ Recognize current volunteer readers, tutors and mentors from the faith community. Ask them to share their experiences and invite others to join.

Learn more and register your project at www.nafj.org



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