United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County
Community Investment Process Guidance

Community Need

Advisory Committee Questions:
1. Is the need clear?
2. How well does the need coincide with the United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County's work?
3. How severe is the need?

Applicant Items to Consider:
1. What problem does your program prevent and/or address?
2. How does the aforementioned problem relate to the United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County's work?
3. If someone does not believe the issue is a significant problem, how would you convince them?

Goals

Advisory Committee Questions:
1. Are the goals clear?
2. If the goals are achieved, would the program address or even reduce the previously identified need?

Applicant Items to Consider:
1. What is your program trying to achieve?
2. What benefits do you want your clients, participants, patients, or the community to receive from the program?
3. How do the goals relate to United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County's work?

Program

Advisory Committee Questions:
1. How effective will the program be (or how effective is the program) at reaching its intended beneficiaries?
2. How effective will the program be (or how effective is the program) at achieving its goals?
3. How effective will be the program be (or how effective is the program) at promoting equity?
4. How committed is the agency to partnering the program with other entities and programs to maximize impact?
5. Is the budget request clear, reasonable, and logical?

Applicant Items to Consider:
1. How would you explain the program to someone who has never heard about it (i.e., who, what, when, where, why, and how)?
2. In what ways does your program promote equity?
3. Whose partnership will strengthen the program?
4. What do you and your partners bring to the table in terms of financial resources, capacity, expertise, etc.?
5. What will you use the requested United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County grant funds to purchase?
6. If you serve multiple counties, how will you ensure that the United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County grant funding benefits only Lafayette County residents?
7. What is the long-term funding plan for your program?
8. Given your financial position, is the amount of requested funding reasonable?
9. How can you implement the proposed program if you receive a partial grant award?
10. How does the program relate to the United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County's work?

Successes, Challenges, & Outcome Measurement

Advisory Committee Questions:
1. How clearly and compellingly can the program report on recent successes and challenges?
2. How effectively will staff be able to assess if the program is achieving its goals?
3. How will data be used to improve the program moving forward?

Applicant Items to Consider:
1. How can you utilize recent as well as future results to measure program impact and facilitate improvements?
2. How will you collect data and use the information to assess as well as improve upon your work?
3. Are the defined outcomes reasonable, useful, and acceptable?
4. How do the outcomes relate to the United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County's work?

Glossary of Selected Outcome Measurement Terms:

Inputs are resources a program uses to achieve program objectives. Examples are staff, volunteers, facilities, equipment, curricula, and money. A program uses *inputs* to support <u>activities</u>.

Activities are what a program does with its inputs –the services it provides–to fulfill its mission. Examples are sheltering homeless families, educating the public about signs of child abuse, and providing adult mentors for youth. Program *activities* result in <u>outputs</u>.

Outputs are products of a program's activities, such as the number of meals provided, classes taught, brochures distributed, or participants served. Another term for "outputs" is "units of service." A program's <u>outputs</u> should produce desired <u>outcomes</u> for the program's participants.

Outcomes are benefits for participants during or after their involvement with a program. Outcomes may relate to knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, behavior, condition, or status. Examples of outcomes include greater knowledge of nutritional needs, improved reading skills, more effective responses to conflict, getting a job, and having greater financial stability.

For a particular program there can be various "levels" of outcomes, with initial outcomes leading to longer-term ones. For example, a youth in a mentoring program who receives one-to-one encouragement to improve academic performance may attend school more regularly, which can lead to better grades, which can lead to graduating.

Outcome indicators are the specific items of information that track a program's success on outcomes. They describe observable, measurable characteristics or changes that represent achievement of an outcome. For example, a program whose desired outcome is that participants pursue a healthy lifestyle could define "healthy lifestyle" as not smoking; maintaining a recommended weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol level; getting at least two hours of exercise each week; and wearing seat belts consistently. The number and percent of program participants who demonstrate these behaviors then is an <u>indicator</u> of how well the program is doing with respect to the outcome.

Outcome targets are numerical objectives for a program's level of achievement on its outcomes. After a program has had experience with measuring outcomes, it can use its findings to set targets for the number and percent of participants expected to achieve desired outcomes in the next reporting period. It also can set targets for the amount of change it expects participants to experience.

Benchmarks are performance data that are used for comparative purposes. A program can use its own data as a baseline benchmark against which to compare future performance. It also can use data from another program as a benchmark. In the latter case, the other program is often chosen because it is exemplary and its data are used as a target to strive for, rather than as a baseline.