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Success By 6® Sites

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MEASURING COMMUNITY CHANGE IN OUTCOMES-BASED INITIATIVES: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF SUCCESS BY SIX® SITES

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Abstract

One of the challenges facing nonprofit organizations today is the demand for measurable results. Increasingly, these organizations are focusing less on program outputs and program outcomes in favor of community outcomes, or changes demonstrated in the larger community. Examples of community outcomes include changes in collective values and support systems, in civic action, social norms, policies, laws, and social, environmental, and economic conditions. However, these changes are not always easy to define or measure. Success By 6® is a popular United Way initiative that emphasizes defining and measuring community outcomes. In speaking with representatives of 24 initiatives around the country, it became clear that not all initiatives are measuring community outcomes, as the majority of initiatives primarily measure program outcomes. However, of those initiatives that were experiencing some success with community outcomes research several similarities exist, including the utilization of pre-existing data sources and use of a consistent evaluation team, usually one within the United Way agency. Additionally, several United Way employees expressed dissatisfaction with the logic model as a framework for defining and measuring community outcomes, although no preferred alternative model was identified. Evaluators working with community-wide initiatives must find a way to communicate the differences between program outcomes and community outcomes to key stakeholders and funders, as not all community changes can be described empirically.
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Introduction

There is a trend in the not-for-profit community away from measuring the success of a program or initiative based on outputs (e.g., clients served) or even client-level outcomes (e.g., did client achieve positive change). Instead, the most current thinking asserts that in order to determine success, a program must contribute to the achievement of measurable community outcomes. Data are gathered on the population the program intends to serve before the program is implemented and at specified time intervals thereafter. Programs may continue to be responsible for data collection, with the results pooled across programs, or the responsibility for measurement may be shifted away from programs and onto funders, who might rely on public records or other types of existing data on communities.

Success By 6® is an important United Way initiative. It focuses on children from birth until they enter kindergarten and aspires to create communities in which children enter kindergarten safe, healthy, and ready to learn. Successes by 6® initiatives are designed to ensure accessible, affordable health care and quality early childhood education for at-risk children. These initiatives strive to continually evaluate their impact by measuring relevant changes in their communities. Several of the participants in this study reported that United Way agencies hope to apply lessons learned by the Success By 6® initiative to their other major initiatives as they gradually convert to community outcomes-based evaluations.

The current study will examine a selection of Success By 6® initiatives to determine the extent to which these initiatives really are measuring and achieving community change. Issues related to defining and measuring outcomes in a community
will be identified; best practices, challenges and instances of measured community change will be reported. This information should prove valuable, as little research has been done on how community outcomes can be measured effectively (Julian, 2001). Further, many funders and agencies admit that they have a limited capacity to perform outcomes-based evaluations that yield meaningful, useful results (Stevenson, Florin, Mills, & Andrade, 2002).

Background

Human services providers and funders have long been concerned with outcomes. Magura and Moses (1986) define outcomes as “…a change or lack of change in the condition, functioning, or problem of a client that can be attributed to the program” (4). Bickman and Rog (1992) define an outcome as a valid measure or indicator of a specific condition that can be measured longitudinally. Schalock (1995) defines an outcome as a change in an adaptive behavior or role status that can be attributed to a program or service. Essentially, an outcome is a measurable change that takes place in a specific population as the result of an intervention.

There are two different types of outcomes that evaluators are concerned with: program outcomes, which are the effects demonstrated by those who receive services, and community outcomes, which are the effects demonstrated in the larger community, not just among those who received services. Program outcomes include such things as changes in personal attitudes, competence, skills, behaviors, or lifestyle. In contrast, community outcomes include things such as changes in collective values and support systems, in civic action, social norms, laws, policies, and social, environmental and economic conditions (Reed & Brown, 2001). In recent years, there has been a shift from
a focus on program outcomes to a focus on community outcomes (Yin & Kaftarian, 1997). The complex nature of the problems faced by many communities cannot be addressed fully by any one program. Instead, many community programs need to work together to create change. Community outcomes-based evaluations are the best way to be assured that programs are contributing to the community in a meaningful way (Schalock, 1995).

Given the recent evaluative shift from program outcomes to community outcomes, it is important to understand that program outcomes cannot be ignored. Julian and Clapp (2000) suggest that program outcomes play an important role in defining and achieving community outcomes. Overarching goals for community change can often be described as “macro-level problems” that go beyond the capacity of any one program. Examples of such goals include reducing underage drinking, neighborhood violence, or preventable deaths. Since no one program can effectively address such goals, a more specific, measurable statement of intent must be defined. An example of a statement of intent could be that in the next 5 years, preventable deaths will be reduced by 20% in a community based on reports from the local hospitals. Operationalizing the goal helps individual agencies determine what role they can play in helping to reach the goal. Ideally, the short-term outcomes from individual programs amass to produce the long-term community outcome goal.

Support for Julian and Clapp’s (2000) argument can be found elsewhere in the literature. Magura and Moses (1986) proposed a similar relationship between program and community outcomes. Program operations are designed in light of overarching program goals. In turn, client outcomes are a result of program operations, and
community outcomes are a result of an aggregate of client outcomes. Reed and Brown (2001) take the complexity of the relationship between outcomes further, suggesting that there are five types of outcomes that coexist and influence each other: Individual, group, agency, system, and community outcomes. Individual outcomes are those directly experienced by the individuals receiving services, as well as those providing them. Group outcomes are the effects experienced by the family, work group, or other relevant small group of the individual who received services. Agency outcomes are those experienced by the organization providing services, and systems outcomes are the effects experienced by departments, organizations, or other meaningful groups the agencies are a part of. Finally, community outcomes are those experienced by the community beyond service recipients and those directly affected by them (Reed & Brown, 2001).

Finding ways to transition from a program outcome focus to a community outcome focus has been challenging for many agencies and funders. In 2000, the United Way of America hosted a Community Leaders’ Conference to address the problem of how to effectively use program outcome data. Focus groups identified one of the biggest struggles they faced was moving from program-level outcomes to community-level outcomes (United Way of America, 2000). Another challenge faced by agencies attempting to measure program outcomes is exactly how to go about collecting the types of data that are needed. Certain types of programs, such as youth development and neighborhood development programs, are inherently hard to operationalize in terms of measurable outcomes, and therefore difficult to collect data for (United Way of America, 2000). Epps and Jackson (2000) observed that collecting data across providers is challenging since programs vary widely among dimensions such as duration, setting,
format of the intervention, and level of provider involvement. They also noted that effects of an intervention are best measured on a homogenous population, which is often not the case in real-world applications. Schalock and Bonham (2003) assert that many difficulties arise in measuring outcomes and managing results because most agencies lack a clearly defined program evaluation model and measurement methods, a program logic model that connects inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes, and a method for managing results.

Stevenson et al. (2002) document some of the challenges faced by 14 Rhode Island human services programs attempting to build evaluation capacity. While many aspects of evaluation design were acceptably implemented by most of the programs (e.g., defining objectives, selecting measures, fitting measures with objectives, and designing a research project), some of the aspects of evaluation implementation were not in place. For example, 8 of the 14 programs had not defined procedures for data collection, and therefore had no data collected. Further, 13 of the 14 programs had no mechanism for data analysis or result reporting. This provides support of Schalock and Bonham’s 2003 argument that agencies are lacking in measurement methods and methods for managing results.

In a study with aims somewhat similar to those of the present project, Botcheva, White and Huffman (2002) examined the extent to which 25 California social services agencies (all serving children) collected outcome data. Twenty-four of 25 agencies reported collecting data. Sixty percent of the agencies described their data collection as “systematic,” 20% defined it as “sporadic.” Most agencies collected more than one type of data, including client demographics (74%), client problem type and severity (61%),
and client completion/dropout status (44%). Slightly over half of the agencies reported collecting short-term data (57%), while only 22% reported collecting long-term data. A variety of support services needed to facilitate better data collection were identified, including training in outcomes evaluations techniques, help with building internal capacity for evaluation, help with program design and consultation, establishment of a database, assessment of organizational culture, expert consultation, and outside design and implementation of evaluation. Only 13% of agencies surveyed reported needing no support (Botcheva et al., 2002). One conclusion from this study is that evaluation research is not as institutionalized in the social services sector as would be desirable. But the study also, without intending to, highlights the promise of the community outcomes approach. There are such formidable obstacles to evaluating programs piece-meal that perhaps a better approach would be to try to measure change on the community level using data sources that are already in place (e.g., public health records, graduation rates, etc.).

**Study Objectives**

**Objective 1. Determine the extent to which initiatives that intend to measure community outcomes actually do.**

The primary objective of this research is to determine what is being done by Success By 6® initiatives across the nation to measure the impact of the initiative on their communities at large, not just the at-risk population.

**Objective 2. Identify best-practices in community outcome research.**

Given the challenges faced by organizations that do attempt to measure community change, a secondary goal of this research is to share successful strategies for
collecting data and measuring outcomes with other professionals working to measure community outcomes.

Objective 3. *Identify instances of community change having occurred as a result of Success By 6®.*

Identifying community conditions that have been affected by Success By 6® will help provide direction for future initiative efforts.
Success By 6®

Why Success By 6®?

Success By 6® is an initiative that works to bring all sectors of a community together to take responsibility for the success of their youngest citizens, children ages 0-5. The United Way’s rationale for the initiative stems from scientific research that has demonstrated that 90% of brain development occurs in the first three years of life (United Way of Greater Cincinnati, 2003). The United Way offers further support for the initiative by referencing studies that have found that adults who were born into poverty and participated in quality early childhood programs had greater success in school, had less violent behavior, reported higher earnings and property wealth and reported about half as many arrests as adults who had grown up in poverty without the benefits of quality programming (The United Way of Greater Cincinnati, 2003).

Success By 6® capitalizes on this research to create reasons for all sectors of society to be concerned with the status of young children, not just those already involved with children’s issues. Recent estimates assert that a year in prison costs, at minimum, $22,000, while a year of preventive services costs only $6,000 (United Way of Greater Cincinnati, 2003). As stated above, it has been found that preventive services have a large effect on violent and illegal behavior, which in turn greatly reduces the amount of money spent on remedial services such as prison later in life. Preventive services also help create more self-sufficient citizens who contribute to the economy. When presented with this evidence, community commerce and business leaders cannot refute the importance of preventive services for young children. Many businesses, including the Bank of America, the most notable corporate partner of Success By 6®, feel that the best
way to ensure a strong, productive workforce in the future is to invest in helping young children enter kindergarten healthy, safe and ready to learn. In these ways, Success By 6® elicits the support of prominent community leaders who may not be usually associated with early childhood advocacy and support.

Gaining support from multiple community partners has been a trademark of Success By 6®. The first United Way Success By 6® effort was developed in Minneapolis (MN) in 1988. It was a collaborative effort between the mayor, the Chief Executive Officer of the Honeywell Corporation, the Superintendent of Schools and the Chief Professional Officer of the United Way of Minneapolis Area (United Way of America, n. d.). Success By 6® today is the United Way’s most recognized initiative, as over 350 communities in the United States and Canada have started a Success By 6® effort.

It can be posited that Success By 6® has been successful for several reasons, one of which is the flexibility afforded individual agencies to establish an initiative that will be most meaningful to the local community. While the overarching goal of every Success By 6® is essentially the same (ensuring that “…all children ages 0-6 are healthy, nurtured and ready to succeed”, (United Way of America, n. d., p. 1)), this can be interpreted and implemented in numerous ways. For example, Success By 6® in Boston works to change public policy affecting young children and families, while Success By 6® in Portland (OR) aims to reduce child abuse in the community by changing community norms regarding the care of children (Howe, Green, & Valerius, 2003).

Success By 6® has become one of the United Way’s most important initiatives for other reasons as well. Another notable component of the initiative is its commitment to
measuring community outcomes. This is particularly important in today’s social and program evaluation climate, as limited funding opportunities demand that programs do more than just report participation rates (Gallagher, 2003). Defining and measuring community outcomes allows programs to more fully assess their impact on their communities, which leads to more concrete information for funders, and in turn, better funding decisions. United Way agencies across the United States have earmarked Success By 6® as the prototype for measuring community outcomes, and lessons learned by the initiative will be utilized in the future as other United Way initiatives are converted to the measurable community outcomes method of evaluation. The United Way is pushing for community-outcome-focused planning because it engages multiple stakeholders in the community, it creates a set of realistic expectations for the program or initiative, and it provides opportunity for dialogue, which allows participants to challenge their own beliefs as well as to have a feeling of ownership in regard to the initiative (United Way of America, 2002). In developing its initiative in 2002 and 2003, the United Way of Greater Cincinnati made a visible commitment to measurement issues, stating that “We must measure the issues we care about. If we care about how well our children are prepared for kindergarten, we must measure school readiness. Community benchmarks will let us know what progress we are making and where further effort is needed” (United Way of Greater Cincinnati, 2003, p. 14).

Success By 6® in Cincinnati

In the latter part of 2001, Cincinnati Community Action Now (CAN) approached the United Way of Greater Cincinnati in an effort to gather together community leaders to focus on meeting the needs of the community’s youngest children. A Steering Council,
which comprised 40 business, civic, philanthropic, educational and religious leaders, and an Operations Council, which comprised 50 early childhood experts and advocates, was convened in June 2002. The Operations Council drew on its knowledge and experience to make recommendations for action to the Steering Council, which served as the governing body (United Way of Greater Cincinnati, 2003).

When first convened, both the Steering and Operations Councils spent time working to understand the issues facing children age 0-5 in Hamilton County. This was done by developing a demographic profile of these children based on the most recent Census data, and by holding 10 parent focus groups. The demographic profile revealed that 33% of Hamilton County children live in poverty or low-income households (100-199% of the Federal Poverty Level). Parents told the Councils that the biggest challenges they faced were finding accessible, reliable, high-quality child care; finding time to fulfill parenting responsibilities such as spending one-on-one time with the child; dealing with problem child behavior such as potty training and bedtime; and feeling as if their child’s health care provider thought of them as competent individuals. The final part in understanding the issues faced by young children was addressed outside of the community. Five other cities with high quality Success By 6® or other early childhood programs were selected for visits. These cities included Boston (MA), Cleveland (OH), Lane County (OR), Miami-Dade (FL), and St. Louis (MO).

The next step in establishing Cincinnati’s initiative was to develop vision and mission statements, as well as the basic values and principles that would serve to guide the initiative. A small task group from the Operations Council was responsible for
generating these statements, and the Steering Council approved and affirmed them.

These statements are as follows:

_Vision._

By age 6, all children in our region are optimally safe, healthy and prepared to succeed.

_Mission._

Success By 6® identifies desired high-level community outcomes and measurements, develops an action plan and creates and sustains the community determination and capacity to make all children, ages 0-5, safe, healthy, and successful. Parents and community partners play significant roles in creating nurturing and culturally sensitive environments for all children. Our focus is on the children in Hamilton County.

_Values._

Parents and caregivers are the most critical individuals in the success of our children.

All professionals and caregivers are sensitive and responsive to cultural differences among families and children.

Children with special needs are afforded the most appropriate and inclusive environment.

All providers recognize and are responsive to the needs of the whole child.

_Principles._

Success By 6® is a broad-based community movement that every citizen, provider, business, and government can support.
Our children can be successful. Success By 6® promotes the importance of high expectations for all children.

After the vision, mission, values and principles were adopted, the Operations Council was divided into three task groups: Physical Health and Safety, Social and Emotional Development, and Early Learning. The goal of each task group was to develop outcomes, preliminary measurements, and strategies. The three groups developed two ultimate outcomes and corroborating indicators, as well as five strategies. The Steering Council then took these outcomes and strategies and created five action task forces, one for each strategy. These task forces included individuals from the Steering and Operations Councils, as well as additional non-council members. From these five task forces, an action agenda was developed that included the two ultimate outcomes and indicators and four strategies (two of the initial five were combined):

**Ultimate outcome 1.**

All children grow up optimally safe and healthy.

**Ultimate outcome 2.**

All children are socially, emotionally and cognitively prepared to succeed in kindergarten.

**Strategy 1.**

Raise community awareness and create a demand for quality and progress.

**Strategy 2.**

Assess every child, before and at the beginning of kindergarten, to determine school readiness. Measure changes in school readiness over time and improve Success By 6® strategies as a result.
Strategy 3.
Improve early childhood health care and education.

Strategy 4.
Improve services for children and their families by streamlining and coordinating the service delivery system and identifying additional financial resources as needed.

Upon the approval of the action agenda in April 2003, the Operations and Steering Councils were officially disbanded, although many members of both Councils remain actively involved with the initiative.
Method

Participants

The United Way agencies that were selected for the study were those in mid-sized metropolitan areas that had been operating Success by 6\(^\circ\) initiatives for at least two years (we were not certain what effect metropolitan area size would have on an initiative’s ability to effect community change, so given that the impetus for this study was my experience in consulting with the United Way of Greater Cincinnati, this study examined initiatives in mid-sized metro areas). The population size of each metropolitan area that met the first criterion was determined by accessing Summary File 1 of the 2000 United States Census online (www.census.gov). For metro areas that are part of consolidated metropolitan areas, the population of the larger, consolidated metro area was used (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, n. d.). Thirty-one agencies serving metropolitan areas with populations ranging from 899,547 to 4,354,244 residents were originally selected to participate. At initial contact, it was discovered that four of those United Ways no longer had a Success By 6\(^\circ\) initiative. Twenty-seven Success by 6\(^\circ\) directors or other United Way staff participated in the study, representing 24 United Way agencies.

Materials

Recruitment letters explaining the research project and answering “Frequently Asked Questions” were sent to all potential participants before they were contacted by phone. Semi-structured telephone interviews were used to collect data. A core set of open-ended questions were asked of all participants. These questions were designed to meet at least one of the project’s three identified objectives: Determine the extent to which initiatives
that intend to measure community outcomes actually do; Identify best-practices in community outcome research; Identify instances of community change having occurred as a result of Success By 6®. In order to determine the extent to which initiatives intended to and actually were measuring community outcomes, participants were asked questions such as:

- What were the community conditions that led to the creation of Success By 6® in your area?
- Did you collect any baseline data related to those conditions?
- In planning your initiative, how important was it that your plan included measurements of outcomes?
- What were some of the specific outcomes you were interested in tracking at the beginning of the initiative?
- How has your initiative developed since it was established?
- Are you measuring community outcomes now?

The second objective, to identify best practices in community outcomes research, was largely met by asking non-scripted follow-up questions to responses to the questions listed above. Successful strategies for defining and measuring outcomes were collected from accounts of how each initiative went about performing these tasks. The third objective, to report instances of community change attributable to Success By 6®, was addressed by asking participants the following two questions and any pertinent follow-up questions:

- Have you been able to document any changes since the initiative began?
- Do you have any kind of community report card that you publish?
Procedure

United Way agencies that met the criteria outlined above were invited to participate in the study. Mailing addresses and phone numbers were gathered from agency websites, and the name of the Success By 6® director or other appropriate staff member was determined by calling each agency. Individual Success By 6® directors or other appropriate staff members were contacted directly, first by a letter explaining the aims of the research, and then by telephone or email to schedule a telephone interview. The interview consisted of open-ended questions pertaining to how the initiative defines and measures outcomes in its community. At the onset of the interview, each participant was informed of their right to give information “off the record,” meaning that it could be included in the final report but would have no identifying information of any kind attached to it. Each participant was also informed that no personal identifiers would be included in the final report, but that city names would be attached to information in many cases. No formal informed consent was collected, as the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board approved a waiver.
Results

There were three research objectives: 1) Determine the extent to which initiatives that intend to measure community outcomes actually do, 2) Identify best practices in community outcomes research and 3) Identify instances of community change that have occurred as a result of Success By 6®. With respect to each of these issues, I was interested in establishing reasons why initiatives were successful as well as reasons why initiatives were sometimes unsuccessful. Figure 1 provides a concept map for the chapter, with the numbers in the boxes on the first and third rows representing the order in which these topics will be addressed. In order to make the results useful to organizations that might wish to follow-up in order to learn more about the successful outcomes, as well as to recognize those sites for their accomplishments, success stories usually include the name of site. Accounts of why initiatives were not successful are generally presented without naming the site.

Figure 1. Concept map of Results.
Intentions to Measure Community Outcomes

Why measurement is important

Many social problems are widespread, making it difficult for programs to make a difference. By assembling available resources and stakeholders, community-wide initiatives may be able to reduce overlaps in services provided, fill gaps in programs, and make the most effective use resources. Sometimes the goals of these initiatives include changes in policies and social structures in order to effect change indirectly in the lives of community members, rather than directly through service provision.

In order to measure the effectiveness of such initiatives, it is neither feasible nor practical to try to evaluate effects on a program-by-program basis. Instead, a measurement strategy that captures changes to the entire community is needed. Success by initiatives, at least in principle, work to capture those changes through efforts to define and measure community outcomes.

Eleven of the initiatives studied reported that they were measuring community outcomes, while six additional initiatives were committed to but had not yet begun measuring community outcomes. The remaining seven initiatives reported that they were measuring program outcomes, but not community outcomes.

Initiatives measuring community outcomes.

The initiatives measuring community outcomes collected data on specific indicators yearly or biyearly and compared the results to previous years or to other populations (e.g., other cities, statewide data). Richmond (VA) published an online report card that allowed comparisons between individual neighborhoods,
the city and the state on a wide range of children’s issues. Miami (FL) published a report card that reported the progress made in five focus areas since 1999. The changes were expressed in terms of a letter grade, with detailed supporting data on a number of indicators tracking trends in Miami-Dade County, rating the county in relation to other Florida counties, and comparing the county to the state of Florida. Several initiatives, including Fort Lauderdale (FL) and Miami (FL) noted using logic models to help guide their measurement process.

*Initiatives committed to future community outcomes measurement.*

With the exception of Minneapolis-St. Paul (MN), none of the initiatives that were moving toward community outcomes measurement had focused on community outcomes in the past. The movement toward community outcome measurement was occurring for several reasons. Phoenix (AZ) and St. Louis (MO) were working to align their community outcomes measurement with the State School Readiness Board and St. Louis 2004, respectively, both of which are overarching initiatives. Massachusetts Bay (MA), Oklahoma City (OK) and Kansas City/Independence (MO) were adopting the community outcomes measurement strategy because of the increased focus on community outcomes by the United Way of America. Minneapolis-St. Paul had temporarily suspended community outcomes measurement while they searched for a more effective conceptual framework than the United Way logic model. While Minneapolis-St. Paul found the United Way logic model an effective way to identify program outcomes, it was not a good tool to define community outcomes.
**Why measuring community outcomes is important.**

Virtually every initiative endorsed the importance of measuring community outcomes, whether they were doing so or not. Memphis (TN) was the one exception, having not explicitly discussed community outcomes measurement, but rather assuming that it would be done, as it was for all United Way programs and initiatives. Four initiatives said that measuring community outcomes is important because it is the way in which the United Way is moving; two initiatives are using Success By 6® as a pilot for other community initiatives; four initiatives are measuring community outcomes in part because it’s required to receive Bank of America grant money. Two initiatives see community outcomes measurements as a call to action for the community; two see community outcomes measurements as a way to get the community committed financially; four see community outcomes measurements as a way to be able to see differences that are made. Finally, one initiative is measuring community outcomes because Success By 6® is part of a larger initiative.

**Why measurement is not always happening**

Several of the initiatives were focused more on measuring program outcomes than on community outcomes. At the time of the interview, Raleigh-Triangle Park (NC) was completely changing its measurement focus so that it could better assess its impact rather than the impact of the programs it supports, but the planning process was still in the early stages and few concrete decisions had been made. Sacramento (CA) was not measuring community outcomes, but rather was communicating success to funders by the stories of individual children that were helped.
Measurement Issues

Measuring community outcomes can be a daunting task. Initiatives shared techniques and strategies they found to be successful when measuring community outcomes. Challenges and obstacles to measuring community outcomes were also shared.

Best practices

Outside evaluation.

Seven initiatives used evaluators from outside of the United Way system to measure community outcomes. Five of these evaluations were done by local universities. Evaluation teams often brought a higher level of expertise to the initiatives, and allowed Success By 6® staff to focus their energies elsewhere.

Houston (TX): There was a great deal of collaboration between Success By 6® and the Greater Houston Collaborative for Children (GHCFC). GHCFC has done multiple evaluations of the services provided by the initiatives, which has been of great use to Houston’s Success By 6®.

Orlando (FL), Baltimore (MD), St. Louis (MO), Charlotte (NC) & San Antonio (TX): All of these initiatives had partnered with local colleges and universities at some point to do an evaluation of the initiative. Baltimore, St. Louis and San Antonio were still actively working with universities at the time of their interviews.

In-house evaluation.

Three initiatives had divisions within their United Ways devoted to the measurement of community outcomes for all initiatives. These divisions had
already been established in Richmond (VA) and Houston (TX), while Massachusetts Bay (MA) was in the process of creating one during the interview. In-house evaluation teams gave the organization control over the measurement process, allowing it to produce consistent, ongoing outcome measures. Richmond is a particularly good example of the type of outcomes measurement that can be done by the United Way.

Making use of existing data.

While all of the initiatives that are measuring outcomes use some data from other sources, five initiatives and one United Way system are using secondary data exclusively in their evaluations. Using pre-existing data eliminated the time-consuming step of data collection, and often ensured that the data was representative of the community.

**Richmond (VA):** *State Health Department data are used to track immunization rates of young children.*

**The United Way of Massachusetts Bay (MA):** *This United Way system is using indicators that are already being measured by other organizations to operationalize their community outcomes.*

**Kansas City-Independence (MO):** *Data from several different agencies are utilized, including state agencies and local school systems.*

Collaborations.

Many of the initiatives that were able to describe the measurement of community changes had partnered with other programs, initiatives or organizations in their cities. These partnerships were described as a positive in the community, as
partnerships advanced the initiative through more community involvement, more financial support, and more discussion of issues affecting young children. Community partnerships foster community change.

**Phoenix (AZ):** A partnership with the State School Readiness Board spurred the development of measures of school readiness for the entire state.

**Richmond (VA):** The initiative partnered with over 100 public and private agencies, businesses, and childcare providers to form the Early Childhood Development Coalition (ECDC). The ECDC is not focused on programming; rather, its aim is to influence policy and systems changes.

**Minneapolis-St Paul (MN):** One of the most meaningful partnerships this initiative developed is with the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank, which has taken up the Success By 6® message of investing in prevention rather than paying for remediation.

**St. Louis (MO):** The evaluation being done on the Success By 6® was a joint effort funded by the United Way and by Arches, another early childhood program.

**San Antonio (TX):** When Success By 6® was introduced in this area, it was not the first effort to address the needs of young children, nor was it the most advanced. As a result, this initiative’s role has been to convene other efforts.

Research efforts.

Two initiatives and one United Way system indicated that they were doing some kind of outside research to inform their measurement process. The initiative in Phoenix (AZ) is examining what other agencies have done to measure community outcomes, as well as utilizing consultants to help develop a community outcomes
measurement model. The United Way of Massachusetts Bay has done a literature review, met with experts, and conducted community symposiums to help develop a measurement model. These research efforts allow these initiatives to learn from others’ successes and mistakes, helping them make more informed decisions about what their own measurement efforts should look like.

Importance of planning.

The value of a thoughtful planning process in community outcomes measurement was cited as important by three initiatives. Measuring community outcomes is an ongoing process that requires a significant amount of planning.

**Houston (TX):** This initiative promotes careful planning of measurement strategies driven by good baseline data.

**Richmond (VA):** Initial community outcomes were chosen in part because it was certain they could be measured for the community.

**St. Louis (MO):** Being willing to allocate appropriate funds to the measurement effort was emphasized by this initiative.

The importance of stakeholder involvement.

Richmond (VA) and Kansas City-Independence (MO) found that stakeholder approval of indicators and measurement strategies were valuable to the initiative. Their approval ensured cooperation and access to resources needed to meet the initiative’s goals. In Kansas City-Independence, a United Way logic model was used to help structure the data-collection process and to align community partners.
Obstacles

Limitations of measuring community outcomes.

Seven initiatives noted limitations to their measurement strategies that stemmed from the outcomes themselves. Poorly defined and difficult-to-measure outcomes make effective measurement strategies all but impossible. Many of the initiatives struggled with how to measure broad concepts like community awareness and school readiness.

Orlando (FL): This initiative is planning how to measure community awareness of early childhood issues.

Louisville (KY): Identifying specific components of broad outcomes to measure was difficult for this initiative.

Richmond (VA): This initiative noted that ideal data sets are not always available or accessible.

Houston (TX): Getting evaluators to think past client satisfaction and other program outcomes was challenging for this initiative.

Limitation of measurement tools.

Four initiatives indicated that they were not satisfied with the traditional United Way evaluation tool, the United Way logic model, and were in the process of looking for another evaluation framework. The United Way logic model was designed to address the issue of program outcomes, and in that capacity it is useful. However, some respondents felt that it is not readily adoptable to address community outcomes. It is interesting to note that in order to receive grant money
from the Bank of America, initiatives are required to submit plans to measure community outcomes in logic model form.

**Phoenix (AZ):** *Translating specific evaluation strategies from individual programs to the initiative as a whole was challenging, and there is no good model available for the evaluation of such a large initiative.*

**Minneapolis-St. Paul (MN):** *This initiative has temporarily suspended measuring community outcomes until it finds a measurement model that better suits community change, especially the measurement of public awareness.*

**Portland (OR):** *It would be helpful if the United Way of America provided more guidance on measurement strategies for community outcomes.*

**Adequate funding.**

Obtaining funding to measure community outcomes is a challenge for at least five initiatives. When appropriate data are not available for the measurement of a particular outcome, one of the challenges Richmond (VA) faces is finding the funding to collect the data. Both Memphis (TN) and Orlando (FL) noted that funders often get impatient and want to see changes in children after just one year of programming. Both initiatives expressed the wish that funders understood the need to be able to give the initiative some time to make an impact before decisions to cut funding are made.

**The politics of data.**

Three initiatives related similar stories of having problems attaining available data in certain instances. School systems were particularly unwilling to share data. Respondents reported that school systems who had been asked to do so expressed
a fear that indicators of poor student performance would drive families out of the
district. One United Way staff member had to petition to each school in a district
individually to get the data needed to measure school readiness in children. In
order to quell similar fears of negative publicity, another United Way staff
member had to visit some schools individually to get their support for the Success
By 6° initiative.

_Lack of a system for young children._

Both Minneapolis (MN) and Richmond (VA) noted how difficult it is to collect
systems change data for children who are not in any kind of formal system (e.g.,
Head Start). Young children are difficult to track and easily fall through the
cracks. The Early Childhood Development Coalition in Richmond, of which the
initiative is a part, is working to develop a system to help track young children.

_Limitations of agency-collected data._

Several initiatives are using pooled data from individual agencies to measure
community outcomes. In most instances, individual program data cannot be
complied to give an indication of the status of all children in the community.
Additionally, trying to pool individual program data can be problematic in itself.
Three initiatives that are doing so cited problems with this data collection method.

**Fort Lauderdale (FL) & San Antonio (TX):** _Keeping individual agencies
motivated to collect data consistently and by specific deadlines is difficult._

**Norfolk (VA):** _Not all of the agencies included in this initiative use the same
measurement tools for the same indicators, which creates difficulty in
aggregating the data._
Limitations of program outcomes.

Many initiatives were collecting program outcome data, either to complement community outcome data or to stand alone. Baltimore (MD) noted that while program outcomes are important, one measurement challenge is making sure the tools used to collect data are valid. For this evaluation team, validity was ensured by spending a great deal of time speaking with service providers and recipients. Both Richmond (VA) and San Francisco (CA) sometimes used program outcome data as a proxy for community outcome data when community-wide measurement was not feasible. The initiatives observed that while this was not the best measurement practice, it was sometimes necessary.

Other obstacles.

Two other obstacles to measuring outcomes were reported by initiatives. In Birmingham (AL), parental support of the initiative was low. Many parents did not understand why they need to worry about school readiness until their child enters kindergarten. As a result, many parents did not take part in many recommended services offered by the initiative. Oklahoma City (OK) has experienced problems getting too involved in providing direct care, which takes away from the initiative’s ability to do other things.

Community Impact

Part of the appeal of the Success By 6® initiative is that it allows for individual communities to identify the issues on which to focus. Success By 6® has experienced success in “moving the needle” in many ways in different communities. There are also
some challenges the initiatives have run up against. This section paints a picture in broad strokes of those successes and challenges.

It is worth noting that while a number of initiatives are measuring community outcomes or working toward that end, not all of those initiatives are discussed in this section. In some cases, relatively new initiatives had not been up and running long enough to get their measurement strategies fully implemented. In other instances, report cards issued by the United Way or other sources reported the impact of programs on participants rather than the impact of the initiative on the community. While program alignment is an important step to achieving community outcomes, information about program outcomes is not relevant to this discussion.

The success stories and challenges experienced by initiatives were of two types: either an outcome supported by numbers, or a qualitative change in the community that could not easily be expressed numerically. In a practical sense, changes that can be supported with some sort of numerical data are often the most useful, as many initiatives reported being interested in measuring community outcomes in order to obtain Bank of America grant money. Changes that are not supported by numbers cannot be ignored, however. Part of the goal of a community-wide initiative is to raise community awareness, to better educate the public, and to change social norms—all goals that are not easily captured by usual measurement techniques. Not all of the community changes reported in this section can be described with numbers, however, when possible, changes reported are supported numerically.
Success stories

Impact on pregnancy and prenatal care.

Three initiatives were concerned with lowering the rate of teenage pregnancy, the percentage of low birth weight babies born and the infant mortality rate, and with increasing the number of women who seek prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy.

Richmond (VA): While the city still has higher teen pregnancy rates than the state of VA (92.0 v. 28.5 per 1,000 girls ages 15-17), there have been some areas of the city that have seen marked improvement from 1998 to 2002: Charles City went from 48.0 to 19.7; Dinwiddle from 39.5 to 15.1; Petersburg from 104.4 to 86.3 (Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce [GRCC], 2002c).

Richmond (VA): The low birth weight (LBW) rate in the city is higher than the state rate (9.1 v. 8.0 per 1,000 live births), but the metro area saw a decrease in LBW rates in several subregions from 1997 to 2002 (Charles City: 14.0- 9.0; Hopewell: 11.3- 3.9; Petersburg: 10.7- 4.6) (GRCC, 2002b).

Miami (FL): The percentage of expectant mothers seeking prenatal care in the first trimester rose from 75% in 1991 to 85% in 1997 (United Way of Miami-Dade, 1999).


Baltimore (MD): This initiative reported a 13% reduction in infant mortality (United Way of Central Maryland, n. d.).

Impact on children’s health and safety.
Two of the overarching goals of the Success By 6® initiative is that children come to kindergarten healthy and safe. To meet these goals, initiatives focused on assisting parents with immunizations, on increasing the number of children enrolled in a health insurance program, on increasing the availability of mental and behavioral health services for young children, and with decreasing the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

**Miami (FL):** *The percentage of children who have received a basic schedule of immunizations by age 2 has risen from 80.2% in 1995 to 85.5% in 1999. This initiative also received national recognition for increasing child immunization rates (United Way of Miami-Dade, 1999).*

**Orlando (FL) & San Antonio (TX):** *These initiatives reported getting a large number of children enrolled in government-funded medical insurance programs.*

**Las Vegas (NV):** *To improve access to services, forms in doctor’s offices and clinics were translated into Spanish.*

**Nashville (TN):** *As a result of efforts of the initiative, the city of Nashville has created a division for counseling families and teachers of problem preschoolers, as well as the preschoolers themselves.*

**Richmond (VA):** *The number of cases of child abuse or neglect reported in the city have declined from 13.2 per 1,000 children in 1998 to 9.1 per 1,000 children in 2000. However, the report notes how difficult it is to accurately measure the instances of child abuse and neglect. Data are from the VA dept. of Social Services (GRCC, 2002a).*
Miami (FL): There has been a drop in rate of substantiated abuse/ neglect cases, from 4.15/ 1000 in 1994 to 2.45/ 1000 in 1998. The community also saw a policy change that made swifter arrests of domestic violence perpetrators without the consent of the victim possible. However, the report card encourages interpreting these data with caution (United Way of Miami-Dade, 1999).

Baltimore (MD): The city reported a 15% reduction in rates of substantiated abuse and neglect (United Way of Central Maryland, n. d.).

Orlando (FL): The service provided by the initiative to reduce instances of child abuse and neglect has expanded with the help of state funds.

Impact on children’s readiness for school.

Success By 6® is concerned with school success, and so early education is an important area of focus for many initiatives. The accreditation of early childcare programs and the number of children who are able to pass kindergarten readiness tests are two of the ways initiatives gauge school readiness. Initiatives also focused on issues of lack of knowledge of appropriate child development, low pay and high turnover rates in childcare providers.

Miami (FL): The number of accredited child care programs rose from 17 to 198.

Portland (OR): Based on tests used in some kindergartens in Portland, the percentage of children who enter kindergarten at an appropriate level of readiness have risen from 60% to 70-82%.

Miami (FL): Early education resources were coordinated so that school readiness was increased (United Way of Miami-Dade, 1999).
San Antonio (TX): A kindergarten-readiness checklist was created by the initiative, and more children are entering kindergarten at higher levels of readiness.

San Francisco (CA): The CARES program provides stipends to childcare workers that commiserate with level of professional development to supplement their current salary. Because of this program, there has been a lower turnover rate and higher levels of professional development in the childcare community.

St. Louis (MO): This community reports a growing acceptance as childcare as a profession, as more education and ongoing training becomes required.

Impact on distribution of funds.

One important way Success By 6® initiatives can work to bring change to the lives of young children is to direct more funding towards young children’s issues. Baltimore (MD) reports having leveraged over $17.5 million in investments from funders other than the United Way (United Way of Central Maryland, n. d.).

Partnerships developed within the early childhood community.

Five of the initiatives reported forging or strengthening partnerships between the major players in each community’s early childhood experts and service providers. These partnerships are important because they allow for teamwork and a maximization of available resources rather than several individual entities operating independently of one another.

Richmond (VA): Success By 6® partnered with other early childhood organizations to form the Early Childhood Development Coalition, which works more on a policy and systems level than a programming level.
Phoenix (AZ): A partnership with the State School Readiness Board was developed to focus on school readiness.

Minneapolis (MN): A broad base of partners working to increase the quality of childcare is in place.

Houston (TX): This initiative partnered with the Greater Houston Collaborative for Children and set a new standard for collaboration in Houston.

Sacramento (CA): The initiative is disbanding, in part because it feels that enough is being done by others in this area and United Way money can be better spent elsewhere.

Partnerships developed outside the early childhood community.

At least as important as partnerships developed within the early childhood community are those developed outside of those with immediate ties and interests in the issues of young children. In fact, one interviewee stated that her ultimate goal for the initiative was to “get men in suits to talk about childcare.” System change often does not result from the work of a few organizations, but rather from changes in public policy, social norms, and funding streams. In order to access those, many initiatives have forged important partnerships with the business and legislative communities.

Raleigh (NC): The initiative reported building good relationships with the Hispanic community, which is important to serving the Hispanic children in the city.
Minneapolis (MN): The Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank touts the initiative’s first public awareness campaign about investing dollars in prevention rather than remediation.

Miami (FL): A sector of the board of directors have mobilized themselves to advocate for children.

San Antonio (TX): There are several partnerships here that are worth noting. The first is the one the initiative has with the state legislature. Part of the initiative’s work includes educating legislators about the issues facing young children, and as a result the state policy on health insurance for children was changed in a favorable manner. Additionally, this initiative enjoys a good relationship with the local media. On slow news days, the United Way will be contacted by the media for public awareness pieces.

Louisville (KY): A partnership with the Jefferson County Clerk’s Office resulted in an 8% increase in donations to the Childcare Assistance Account.

Creating useful tools for others in the community.

Three initiatives created things that are useful outside of the programs that fall under the Success By 6® umbrella.

Miami (FL): The initiative has created a work plan, set of tools and database that is used to help childcare centers meet accreditation standard.

Las Vegas (NV): An educational program on diversity issues developed for use with health care providers has been requested by the local fire department and others around the state.
Nashville (TN): A database that tracks the results of early childhood health screenings by ZIP code is made available to anyone trying to get a grant, and as a result another organization in the city got a grant to do behavioral health work in preschools.

Miami (FL): An RFP is made available to grantees who are willing to focus on one community indicator.

Challenges

While Success By 6® initiatives proved capable of affecting community change in many areas, there are also issues concerning young children that continue to be challenging. In some cities, while overall conditions are changing for the better, conditions in certain neighborhoods continue to deteriorate. It is also difficult to track some conditions that are crucial to the safety, health, and school readiness of young children. For example, many initiatives struggle with what it really means to be ready for school. Many feel that school readiness includes both academic and social-emotional skills, but are not sure how to assess these skills effectively. Tracking child abuse and neglect is also difficult, as it is impossible to know of all cases of abuse and neglect that occur.

A challenge that multiple initiatives expressed when discussing changes in the community is the idea of causality. Success By 6® is not the only group working to help young children. So many other factors play a role in affecting a change in a community that many feel it cannot be attributed to just one effort.
Since measuring community outcomes is a relatively new task for many evaluators and initiative leaders, it is worthwhile to conclude by summarizing where Success By 6® initiatives are in the measurement process. Table 1 summarizes the progress made toward the empirical measurement of community outcomes by the 24 initiatives interviewed for this project. While it is important to note that this table represents only my judgment, it also gives us a general idea of the state of community outcomes measurement in the Success By 6® initiative. It is also important to remember that a lack of formal measurement processes does not indicate an ineffective initiative.

Table 1.

*The State of Community Outcomes Measurement in the Success By 6® Initiative*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiatives</th>
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<td>Not currently measuring community or program outcomes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on program outcomes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving toward measuring community outcomes</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measuring community outcomes</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>
Discussion

The Success By 6® initiative is founded on the premise that community-wide initiatives have the ability to make widespread, meaningful changes in the general population, and not just in the population served by programs. In some instances, community outcomes can be clearly defined and measured, while in other instances, both definition and measurement strategies are challenging. This chapter will focus on the important differences between the two types of outcomes, best practices in measuring community outcomes, and what should be done in order to help community-wide initiatives such as Success By 6® reach their full potential.

The two types of outcomes

Funders might emphasis either the goals of a program or the goals of an initiative. Programs aim to make changes in the lives of those who receive its services. Community-wide initiatives, on the other hand, aim to make changes in the lives of all members of a community, not just those who attend a certain program. In order to do this, community-wide initiatives are concerned with making changes to the social, political and economic landscape in which the community resides. This type of work demands a different approach than direct programming does.

As is the case with program outcomes, community outcomes might be understood as being either ultimate outcomes or intermediate outcomes. Ultimate outcomes are clear-cut and relatively easy to measure (e.g., to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy, to increase the percentage of children who are fully immunized by the age of two). Intermediate outcomes may be more subtle and difficult to measure. These outcomes include the changes to political and social structures that often must precede the initiative’s ultimate
community outcomes. For example, the initiative in Miami (FL) was able to significantly raise the percentage of two-year-olds who were fully immunized, but only after a change in health care policy was made.

The importance of intermediate outcomes cannot be overstated – without them, ultimate outcomes would be impossible to achieve (assuming a correctly specified logic model). Some of the most often-mentioned community changes reported by United Way staff included the formation of networks and unlikely advocate groups, and in many instances these networks and advocates played a role in making bigger changes. For example, the initiative in Richmond (VA) partnered with over 100 public and private agencies, businesses, and childcare providers to form the Early Childhood Development Coalition (ECDC), which works to influence policy and systems changes. Similarly, in Miami (FL), a subgroup of the board of directors has maintained an active role as an advocacy group. One interviewee stated that her ultimate goal for the initiative was to “get men in suits to talk about childcare.” While this outcome was certainly not in that initiative’s action plan, it is illustrative of the importance of those intermediate outcomes that have the power to help the initiative reach its ultimate goals.

However, while important, intermediate outcomes are associated with problems. Notably, funders may be disinterested in intermediate outcomes Funders usually want to see some kind of return on their investment, and they seem increasingly to want that return measured in terms of ultimate outcomes. Community-wide initiatives are not known for their quick results, and often demand patience from their funders in terms of making widespread, meaningful changes. This can be detrimental for community-wide initiatives in several ways. The initiative in Houston (TX) lost funders during the
planning process because they were very thoughtful about how to measure the community’s awareness of early childhood issues before and after the initiative’s awareness campaign. Both Memphis (TN) and Orlando (FL) had funders that wanted to see changes in children’s school readiness levels after only one year of operation. Other initiatives complained of being forced into evaluation strategies that did not fit their goals in order to receive grants. Several initiatives fell into the trap of allocating too many resources to direct services to please funders, leaving little time or money left to tasks such as raising community awareness or lobbying for children’s issues. In short, the demands of funders do not match the needs of community-wide initiatives.

Best practices in measurement

Initiatives that were best at tracking community changes did so by using built-in, consistent measurement techniques. Measuring community outcomes is no easy task, and many initiatives did not attempt the task on their own. Some initiatives turned to outside sources for the evaluation piece of the initiative, with some success. However, when this method was employed, both the continuity and consistency of measurement were compromised. Outside evaluators are often brought in to the initiative at some midpoint rather than from the very beginning, and this creates the potential for a problem in how the prescribed outcomes are measured. Bringing evaluators in also provides the potential to postpone an evaluation. Several initiatives had done an initial evaluation, but had yet to do a follow-up evaluation, making the measurement of change impossible. Other initiatives had much more success with internal evaluation, usually done by a department in their United Way agency. These departments were devoted to the measurement of community conditions for all United Way initiatives. Continuity and consistency of
measurement was less of a problem for these evaluators, as they had been involved with the initiative since the very beginning.

Evaluators who were successful at tracking community outcomes were able to do so by using data collected by agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. These and other agencies are well-equipped to collect data on large groups of people, while individual United Way agencies are much less able to do so. When left to collect their own data on community outcomes, the initiatives primarily collected program outcomes data. Taking advantage of the resources available was an important trait of initiatives that were successful in measuring community outcomes.

*A roadmap for the Success By 6® initiative*

While all but one initiative interviewed spoke of the importance of measuring community outcomes, only a few were able to successfully track changes that had been made in their communities since the initiative began. In order to effectively measure community outcomes, Success By 6® initiatives must do four things.

First, the evaluation team should be engaged from the beginning of the initiative. Evaluators will be best able to understand the goals of the initiative when they are involved in the planning process, and they will be able to provide feedback about the feasibility of proposed outcomes and indicators. Involving the evaluation team from the beginning also provides opportunity to set a clear schedule of evaluation. Initiatives like Miami (FL) that utilized the evaluation departments of their United Way agencies were often successful at consistent, continuous measurement of pre-defined outcome indicators.
Second, clear definitions are needed of the ultimate outcomes the initiative wishes to achieve and the corresponding indicators. Houston (TX) was proud of its thoughtful planning process, and was confident that the measurement of community outcomes will be successful because of it. Consideration should also be given to what intermediate outcomes might need to be achieved to make the ultimate outcomes possible.

Third, baseline conditions for the community must be documented. This provides the initiative with a way to gauge its effects on the community over time. Ideally, baseline conditions should be collected from data already available. Almost every initiative collected some kind of baseline data to help inform the planning process. State boards of education, state departments of health, the U.S. Census, and the Annie E. Casey Kids Count reports are common places from which to pull baseline data.

Fourth, evaluations of the ultimate outcomes should be done on a regular schedule, and should as similar as possible to the baseline measurements. For example, Miami (FL) publishes a large-scale report card every three years. Data should be collected from the same sources whenever possible. In order to best communicate changes in the community, longitudinal comparisons should be drawn. Comparisons to other communities, the state or the nation are also useful.

For those initiatives interested in refining their measurement techniques, the community report cards produced by Miami (FL) and Richmond (VA) are excellent examples of community outcomes measurement. The Richmond report card can be viewed online at http://www.grcc.com/cir/richmond_indicators/richmond_indicators_home.asp, while the Miami report card is in print form.
Charges to evaluators

Evaluators working with community-wide initiatives have responsibilities that differ substantially from those that come from working with programs. The most important responsibility of evaluators is to educate funders about the differences between programs and community-wide initiatives, particularly the role intermediate outcomes play in creating other changes. Better-educated funders have the potential to increase the amount of funds community-wide initiatives are able to access.

Evaluators involved with community-wide initiatives also must find ways to communicate the achievement of intermediate outcomes to funders and other key parties. Education will help funders better understand community-wide initiatives, but the ability to effectively communicate the early effects of the initiative on the community affords the initiative the ability to further raise awareness about its efforts and successes. One potential flaw of community-wide initiatives is that large changes are not often immediately obvious, and the effort loses steam. However, if the initiative was able to clearly report on the status of intermediate outcomes, early successes can be shared and support can be maintained.

The Success By 6® initiative is at once an apt demonstration that community-wide initiatives can be successful in creating changes, and a call for action from the evaluation community to help these types of initiatives reach their potential. Both evaluators themselves and the funders with whom they communicate need to become more familiar with the structure of community-wide initiatives.
References


There has been a recent trend in the non-profit community toward measuring the impact a program or initiative has on an entire community, not just the individuals it serves. This is an exciting way to evaluate program effectiveness, but preliminary research on how agencies measure community outcomes suggest that it also presents a great number of challenges.

I am conducting a study of Success by 6® initiatives around the country in an effort to identify who is measuring community change, and how they are doing so. We also plan to identify cities where Success by 6® has had a measurable impact on the lives of the children in their community, and to identify those conditions or practices that contributed to the local success. Copies of our results will be available via the web, and we will notify you when you may retrieve a copy.

The data for this study will come from phone interviews with United Way employees across the country who have the best local perspective on their community’s Success by 6® initiative. If you are that person, I would like to schedule a time to speak with you by telephone. If not, I would like to converse with you briefly to obtain your recommendation as to whom I should speak with.

This research is overseen by Steven Howe, Ph.D. and has been approved by the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board.

I will be contacting you within the next week or so to schedule a phone interview and to answer any questions you may have about the project. If you have any questions or concerns you would like to address before that time, please feel free to contact me (minichlm@email.uc.edu or 513.253.8721). My advisor, Dr. Steven Howe, will also be glad to answer any questions. He may be reached at steven.howe@uc.edu or at 513.231-8718. Additionally, you will find enclosed with this letter a Frequently Asked Questions sheet that may address some of your concerns.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Lisa Minich
Frequently Asked Questions about the Research Project

Why are you interested in Success by Six®?
We’re interested in Success by Six® for quite a few reasons! It’s a prominent United Way initiative that is active in over 300 communities across the nation. Success by Six® is also an initiative that focuses on community change, a model that is becoming increasingly popular in the United Way and in other human services organizations. We’re interested in finding out what impact Success by Six® initiatives have been having on their communities and how that impact is being measured.

Who is conducting this project?
This project is being conducted by Ms. Lisa Minich, a graduate student in the clinical psychology program at the University of Cincinnati. Steve Howe, Ph.D., is supervising the research. Additionally, the project has been approved by the University of Cincinnati’s Institutional Review Board.

Who is being asked to participate in this project?
Our selection process involved the following steps. First, we chose metropolitan areas that are roughly similar in size and composition to Cincinnati, Ohio. Then we called the United Ways and asked for the contact information for the person in charge of the Success by Six® initiative. Your name was given. If you are the most knowledgeable person, you will probably be the only person in your city that we will interview. (At your recommendation, we may ask some follow-up questions of people to whom you refer us.) If you are not the best person to speak with about Success by Six®, we will still be contacting you to ask whom we should be talking to instead.

What will be expected of me if I decide to participate?
Your participation will involve a short phone interview—and that’s it! The interview should take about 30 minutes, and will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. You will not have to sign a formal consent to participate; rather, your willingness to schedule an interview time will be taken to imply consent.

What types of questions will I be asked?
Questions that you will be asked include:
- What were the community conditions and concerns that led to the creation of Success by Six® in your community?
- Did you collect any baseline data related to those conditions? How?
- In planning your initiative, how important was it that your plan included measurements of outcomes?
- What were some of those specific outcomes that you were interested in tracking at the beginning of the initiative?
- How has your initiative developed since it was established?
APPENDIX B: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Are you measuring community outcomes now? How?
- Have you been able to document any changes in outcomes since the initiative started?
- Do you have any kind of report card to the community that you publish?

We may also ask some follow-up questions to make sure we understand the significance of your answers to the above questions.

What if I don’t know the answers to all of the questions?
You don’t have to know all of the answers to take part in this project. We are interested in hearing what you do know. We are also interested in getting contact information for others who are or have been involved with the initiative that may be able to help fill in some of the blank spots.

It looks like a lot of the questions have to do with measuring outcomes, and our initiative does not do that. Should I still participate?
Yes, please do! We’re interested in why and how initiatives measure community outcomes, but we’re also interested in why others have not, so it is equally important for us to talk with folks like you as it is to talk with representatives in cities that do measure outcomes.

Will my name appear in the final report?
Your name will not appear anywhere in the final report.

Will the name of my city appear in the final report?
We plan to connect the information gathered during interviews to cities. If at any time during the interview you want to say something but don’t want it to be connected with your city, all you have to do is say that the answer is “off the record.” Information that is collected that is off the record will still be used in the final report, but no city name information of any kind will be attached to it. Any (or all) parts of the interview can be off the record.

Will I have access to the results of this project?
Yes. The final report will be available on the web and you will be notified when it is ready.

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns about this project?
If you have further questions or concerns about this project, please don’t hesitate to contact Lisa Minich at 513.253.8721 or at minichlm@email.uc.edu. Dr. Steve Howe is also available to address questions and concerns. He can be reached at steven.howe@uc.edu.
Hi Mr/ Ms _____, this is Lisa Minich from the University of Cincinnati. We have a phone interview scheduled for today. Are you ready to get started?

Ok, great. Before we begin the interview, I’d like to talk with you about confidentiality. Your name will not be used in the final report, but I am planning to connect the name of your city with the information you give me today. However, if there is anything that you want to say but do not want to have connected with your city, you can tell me that you want to go off the record, and that information will not have any identifiers attached to it at all.

I’m also planning on mentioning the types of United Way employees I interview—for example, in the final report there will be a line saying something like I interviewed 19 Sb6 directors and 6 United Way directors for this project. Do you have any questions about any of this?

Any final questions before we get started?

One of the things we’re interested in is the background of your Success By 6 initiative. What were the community conditions and concerns that led to the creation of Success By 6 in ____?

Did you collect any baseline data related to those conditions?

(If yes) How did you do that?

In planning your initiative, how important was it that your plan included measurements of outcomes?

(If not important) What led to the decision to not try to collect outcome data?

What were some of those specific outcomes that you were interested in tracking at the beginning of the initiative?

How has your initiative developed since it was established?

Are you measuring community outcomes now?

(If yes) What outcomes are important now, and how are they being measured?

(If no, and they had in the past) What led to the decision to no longer collect outcome data?

(If collecting data) Have you been able to document any changes in outcomes since the initiative started?

Do you have any kind of report card to the community that you publish?
APPENDIX C: SUCCESS BY 6® TELEPHONE SURVEY

Ok, that takes care of the questions I wanted to ask you today. Do you have any questions about anything we discussed?

Thank you very much for your time! Have a great day!