

2011 Community Needs Assessment
Volume I: In-Depth Interviews of Community Stakeholders



About the 2011 Community Needs Assessment

The United Way of Carlisle and Cumberland County engaged the Institute of State and Regional Affairs (ISRA) at Penn State Harrisburg to undertake a Community Needs Assessment to help them better understand and document their local community needs and issues. The activities undertaken by ISRA are documented individually in specific stand-alone reports (listed below) and culminate in a Final Report offering observations and recommendations.

The individual reports include:

Volume I: In-Depth Interviews of Community Stakeholders

Volume II: Focus Groups

Volume III: Community Survey of Residents

Volume IV: Demographic and Socioeconomic Background Research

Volume V: Final Report and Recommendations

The project team from the Institute of State and Regional Affairs at Penn State Harrisburg included:

Michael Behney, Director, Overall project coordination

Dr. Auden Thomas, Director, Center for Survey Research, Primary data collection coordination

Stephanie Wehnau, Associate Director, Center for Survey Research, Survey instrument development

Nicole Sturges, Project Coordinator, Focus group moderator

Tim Servinsky, Research Associate, Survey tabulation and analysis

Sue Copella, Director, Pennsylvania State Data Center, Demographic data collection coordination

Jennifer Shultz, Associate Director for Operations, Pennsylvania State Data Center, Demographic research

John Maurer, Project Associate, Pennsylvania State Data Center, Demographic research

Larry Meyers, Project Associate, Pennsylvania State Data Center, GIS/Mapping

Erik Li, Director, Information Technology Center, Online systems coordination

Dave Horan, Programmer, Information Technology Center, Website development

Chris Gulotta, Principal of The Gulotta Group, In-depth interviews

Dr. Robert Garraty, CEO of Garraty Workforce Investment, In-depth interviews

Assistance from United Way of Carlisle and Cumberland County was provided by:

Sherrie Davis, Executive Director

Kate Brazel, Community Impact Director

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Volume I: In-Depth Interviews of Community Stakeholders

Technical Report

Conducted for:

The United Way of Carlisle and Cumberland County

Prepared by:

**Center for Survey Research
Penn State Harrisburg**

September 2011

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Summary - Methodology

Background

The United Way of Carlisle and Cumberland County (UWCCC) recently conducted the 2011 Community Needs Assessment as a means of updating its strategic plan. As part of that effort a study team from Penn State Harrisburg conducted 11 in-depth interviews with local stakeholders. The purpose of the interviews was to gather thoughts and perspectives on the local environment and to identify the most pressing needs of the local community.

Participants

In-depth interviews were held with stakeholders identified by the UWCCC. Participants included:

Andrea Crouse, Director , Carlisle Parks and Recreation

Judge Merle "Skip" Ebert, Cumberland County

Elaine Herstek, Executive Director, Sadler Health Center Corp.

Chris Houston, Executive Director, Cumberland/Perry Housing Redevelopment Authority

Dennis Marion, Clerk of Courts, Cumberland County

Patrice Pickering, Director of Homeless Asst. Program, Cumberland County

Reverend Walter Reed , Pastor, St. Peter AME

Jay "Buck" Swisher, local staff representative, U.S. Congressman Todd Platts

Kenn Tuckey, Business Owner, Tuckey Mechanical Services, Inc.

Doris Ditzler, Director of Prevention and Education, Carlisle Area Health & Wellness Foundation

Kathy Byers, Collection Development/Reference Librarian, Bosler Memorial Library

The study team attempted to contact the following but were unsuccessful in gaining their participation:

Mary Boone, School Social Worker, Carlisle Area School District

Patrolman Nicole Dressel, DARE Officer, Carlisle Police Department

John Friend, Superintendent, Carlisle Area School District

Steve Margeson, Chief, Carlisle Police Department

Interviewers

Interviews were conducted during the months of June and July 2011. Conducting the interviews were Michael Behney, Director, Institute of State and Regional Affairs at Penn State Harrisburg; Christopher Gulotta, Principal of the Gulotta Group; and Dr. Robert Garatty, CEO of Garraty Workforce Investment.

A set of key questions was developed by the study team and approved by the UWCCC and used as a guide during the in-depth interviews. The time to complete the interviews ranged from 40 minutes to over 1 hour. Key questions can be found in Appendix 1.

A sample email and phone script were also developed for use in recruiting participants. These can be found in Appendices 2 and 3.

Summary - Observations

Community Strengths, Threats and Issues

There was universal acknowledgement that the character of the people who live in and around the community is strong and the community responds to needs when those needs are effectively communicated.

There was general agreement that there are plenty of agencies available to address the needs of those requiring social services. That is a strength. However, many participants felt there were too many agencies duplicating services and therefore competing for scarce resources. That was a threat. The opportunity for the UWCCC was identified as acting as a broker to help these agencies collaborate and work more uniquely.

Another threat voiced was the continued housing crisis (both mortgage foreclosures and affordable rents problems), which is placing more pressure on local governments and their agencies like the Housing Authority to cut staff, resulting in fewer services. For example, the Authority is being forced to cut its rental assistance program, which is federally funded, which will reduce dramatically the number of vouchers it will be able to issue, affecting at least 200 families. This will undoubtedly result in the area's homeless numbers going up and more people moving out of the area.

This threat was indicative of the interconnected nature of the problems facing lower income families.

A similar situation was expressed regarding transportation. If residents cannot get to work because of a lack of transportation, then it perpetuates unemployment and other social service needs.

Several community leaders interviewed mentioned that the drug problem seems to be getting worse, and this feeds to some extent the increase in domestic violence.

A collection of issues listed in order of frequency include:

Family Crisis, domestic violence, parenting skills, obesity, early education, financial management

Youth Issues, obesity

Workforce development

Housing

Transportation - such as DPW and the Career Link locating outside the borough, creating accessibility problems for those who lack transportation.

Mental Health Services

Senior Citizens Needs

Neighborhood Collaboration

Legal Services

Community Dynamics

Many participants indicated an increasing reliance on faith-based, church and community organizations to provide services to those in need.

There was also an acknowledgement that people do not volunteer as often as they used to, particularly younger age groups. A typical example given: as volunteers working with youth leave, they are not being replaced by new adult volunteers. This vacuum results in the need for specific funding to provide those supervisory activities that were previously done by volunteers. It is especially difficult in this fiscal climate to find new funding for this kind of work.

Community Needs

Several individuals talked about the importance of providing people with life skills needed to tackle issues such as household budgeting, obesity, and job re-training. There was consensus that dollars spent in this way in the past have been well-utilized.

Service Gaps

Everyone interviewed acknowledged that things are tougher for households with modest means, and some households that have never needed human services offered by United Way agencies are applying in greater numbers for those services. Several also mentioned that because of pride or ineffective outreach, some of these households have not sought services.

Another gap identified was the need for something to offset or eliminate the fees charged to participate in social programs, i.e., summer camps and sports leagues.

Strategic Goals

Many participants indicated that the UWCCC should target its limited resources working with the most vulnerable and at-risk population.

A number of participants suggested that programs that focus on getting parents involved with their children pay heavy dividends for the community in the future.

The next year will bring many housing and affordable rental problems to the area, and the United Way should be ready to address this issue.

Community Impact

One way of demonstrating and communicating community impact was to undertake longitudinal studies of individuals who were helped by United Way services and show how those people lives were changed in the long term. Another variation on this theme was the suggestion that case studies of specific individuals who have been served by the programs be put on the local media.

One suggestion to perhaps help in fund raising is to have a “Visit the United Way Agencies Day” where potential donors would have a chance to go and see just what the agencies do on a daily basis.

A number of participants suggested the use of social media as a means for the United Way to demonstrate to the community an awareness of outcomes because of their agencies' intervention that yield a sustainable change in people's lives.

A suggestion was made that giving to the United Way should be seen as "investing in the quality of life of their community" rather than giving to a "charity."

Another suggestion was to communicate outcomes by using graphs showing the percentage of the goals met in terms of people served or assisted with United Way dollars. This idea is similar to how the United Way communicates its effort in reaching annual fundraising goals.

One participant suggested the United Way could better communicate its accomplishments by putting videos on its website about the individual programs supported with United Way funding.

New approaches to reflect an era of declining public resources

Several people interviewed discussed the need for new approaches in a time of emerging needs at the same time public funding is on the decline. Many mentioned the increasing importance of faith-based organizations. Several others indicated that there is a legacy of collaboration among and between agencies and that would become increasingly important in a changing funding environment.

Multiple interviews resulted in suggestions of having the United Way established regularly scheduled "Roundtables" where all private, non-profit, and governmental service agencies (not just agencies receiving funding from the United Way) and businesses come together to discuss common community problems. This would bring to light possible duplication, service gaps, or partnering possibilities. Business leaders feel they should be looked on as more than just "deep pockets." They would like to contribute by participating in these roundtables.

Another suggestion was that agencies funded by the United Way be encouraged to have a "youth component" or some other critical issue in all that they do. While this does not mean that there shouldn't be specific agencies focused just on youth or a single issue, it does mean that United Way funded agencies should all somehow address priority critical issues.

Observation of one of the Interviewers

I think the summary is fine and picks up on the points in the interviews that I did. Think about adding a paragraph about the overall context of the situation locally - the recent closing of two major manufacturing facilities, which has contributed to higher unemployment and the reduction of state and federal funding for human services in order to balance budgets. As a result, more people are seeking government services than ever, but the availability of those services is less than what it was a year or two ago. This point came through in my interviews - a sense that the perfect storm has hit the community, and the United Way needs to be up to the task of addressing this more than ever.

APPENDIX A- QUESTIONS USED FOR INTERVIEWS

Questions to be used as guide for In-Depth Interviews 5/4/11

Will want to have a map of the UWCCC service area and the list of service providers at the interview.

Questions about the UWCCC

Intro

What is it you do for the _____(name of organization) and how long have you lived in the Carlisle area?

Tell me about your relationship with the UWCCC.

Do you know what the UWCCC service area is?

Do you know who the UWCCC service providers are?

Do you know if the UWCCC met its fundraising goal last year?

Do you feel that the UWCCC board is representative of the community?

Do you feel the allocations provided to agencies are done in a transparent and data-driven and results-oriented process?

Do you feel the UWCCC is managed and run efficiently?

Questions on Community Needs

Community Strengths, Threats, and Issues

What do you think are some of the community's greatest strengths?

What do you think are some of the greatest threats?

What do you think are the 3 most important issues the UWCCC should focus its resources on?

Community Dynamics

What changes do you see in terms of emerging trends of those needing the greatest assistance?

Community Needs

Based on what you said above about the 3 most important issues the UWCCC should focus its resources on, - what do you think are the most significant barriers to addressing these needs?

Service Gaps

What do you see as the greatest gap in serving that need? (Service is insufficient or non-existent).

Strategic Goals

What do you see as the near term (next year or so) outlook for those in need?

What about a longer term outlook? (say 3-5 years)

Community Impact

How would you define success in terms of outcomes/accomplishments that the UWCCC and its funded services providers would achieve?

How do you think the UWCCC can best report/communicate the outcomes/accomplishments of the agencies it funds?

APPENDIX B- RECRUITING MATERIALS

Recruiting email for in-depth one-on-one interviews for United Way Needs Assessment:

Dear [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME],

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in an interview for a community needs assessment research study being conducted by a study team at Penn State University. The study is funded by the United Way of Carlisle & Cumberland County. The purpose of the interview is to gather information and understand perspectives from people like you who are leaders in the local community. Your name was suggested by the United Way's needs assessment group. A study summary sheet with more information is attached.

I hope you will agree to be interviewed for this study. If you are agreeable, I can set a convenient time to meet with you for the interview, which will last no more than one hour. I will be audio recording our discussion so that I don't miss any of your comments. I will keep the audio file, and anything you say, completely confidential unless you give permission to be identified and to be quoted or have your comments used as a part of the research study's reporting.

Please let me know if you would be willing to be interviewed. I look forward to hearing from you, and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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APPENDIX C- PHONE SCRIPT

Phone script for One-on-One Interviews Community Needs Assessment, United Way of Carlisle and Cumberland County

1. Contacting the potential participant

Hello, may I please speak to [name]?

If the person is not available :
When would be a good time to reach him/her?

If the participant is available, continue with:

2. Explaining the project

My name is Mike Behney, and I'm calling from the Institute of State & Regional Affairs at Penn State Harrisburg. I am calling to invite you to participate in an interview for a research study of community needs in the Carlisle area being conducted by a study team at Penn State University. The study is funded by the United Way of Carlisle and Cumberland County, and the purpose of the interview is to gather information and understand perspectives from people like you who are who are leaders in the local community. Your name was suggested by the United Way's needs assessment group.

Would you be willing to participate in a one-hour interview on the topic of community needs in the Carlisle area?

If participant agrees or wants more information:

If you are agreeable, I can set a convenient time to meet with you for the interview, which will last no more than one hour. I will be audio recording our discussion so that I don't miss any of your comments. I will keep the audio file, and anything you say, completely confidential unless you give permission to be identified and to be quoted or have your comments used as a part of the research study's reporting. I will also send you a study summary sheet, which describes the study in more depth.

Are you agreeable to participating in an interview for this study?

3. Scheduling the session

Set up a time/date/location agreeable to participant.

Thank you very much. If you have any questions or concerns in the meantime, please contact me at (717) 948-6174. I look forward to seeing you on [date].