

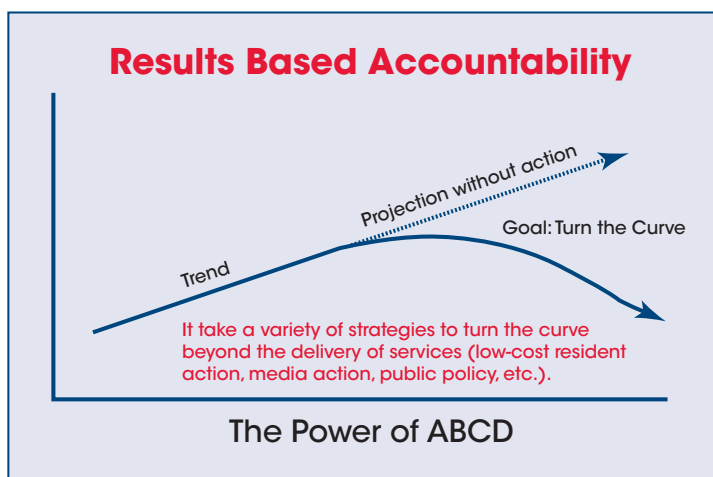
# Redefining the Role of United Ways with Results Based Accountability and Asset Based Community Development

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Our United Way system is embarking on a bold journey to transform communities across the country (and now the world) by setting goals that are focused on education, income and health; the building blocks of a good life. To be successful, this journey requires local United Ways to transform from primarily fundraising and allocating agencies to community building and engagement organizations, bringing the community together to act collectively for the common good, through giving, advocating and volunteering. There are two complementary approaches that can provide the necessary framework to help local United Ways complete this transformation and achieve real long-term results: 1) **Results Based Accountability** (RBA) to focus United Way’s work on achieving measurable improvements in the quality of life in communities (“population results”); and, 2) **Asset Based Community Development** (ABCD) to guide effective engagement of communities in the development of strategies to achieve population results. Together, these theories of change provide the promise of measurable change through community engagement - to truly LIVE UNITED.



RBA provides a framework for the kind of long-term thinking required to truly change community conditions. The RBA structure helps United Way’s to strategically focus their work on substantial community issues and, at the same time, build a culture of measurement and shared accountability for results. RBA enables a United Way to identify population **results** and the corresponding measures necessary to track the achievement of those population results (“indicators”), as well as the **performance measures** to track and improve the performance of agencies and programs.



RBA introduces the power of the concept of “turning the curve” to drive long-term action, the concept of improving a trend line of an indicator rather than setting arbitrary numerical goals, which in even the best cases, usually set unrealistic or minimal results that often do not lead to sustainable long-term change.

The RBA framework can help local United Way's develop effective community based strategies and enhance their grant making activities through the adoption of performance measures to more effectively track and improve the activities of individual agencies, programs and strategies. Performance measures answer the following three questions:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anyone better off?

The RBA framework also helps local United Ways engage their communities in setting community-wide strategies to achieve population results and in sharing accountability for achieving those population results. This shared "Population Accountability" is fostered by engaging communities in systematically asking and answering these questions:

1. *What are the quality-of-life conditions (population results) we want for the children, adults and families who live in our community.*
2. *What would these conditions look like if we could see them?*
3. *How can we measure these conditions?*
4. *How are we doing on the most important of these measures?*
5. *Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?*
6. *What works to do better, including no-cost and low-cost solutions?*
7. *What do we propose to do?*

ABCD can help United Ways enhance their community engagement strategies and provide an effective framework to answer the last three questions. Once the population results and indicators are confirmed, the next steps are to identify the critical partners and implement the strategies necessary to "turn the curve" and improve the results identified for action by a local United Way. Often when we think of strategies, we think "programs". That is only part of the solution. To be successful, these strategies must include resident engagement and action (low cost/no cost strategies). We cannot achieve the results required without the strong engagement of the resources and efforts of residents as well as the work of institutions. In today's environment institutions have reached the limits of their resources and problem-solving. To be truly effective, residents must join the effort as co-producers/co-creators of their own and their community's well being.

***"RBA and ABCD are complimentary processes. RBA starts with the ends we want for our children, families and communities and works backward to the means that will get us there. ABCD provides a robust way of looking at means to get us there."***

– Mark Friedman, Director,  
the Fiscal Policy Studies Institute

***"Unfortunately, many leaders and even some neighbors think the idea of a strong local communities is sort of nice, a good thing if you have the spare time, but not really important, vital or necessary. However, we know strong communities are vital and productive. But, above all they are necessary because of the inherent limits of all institutions."***

– John McKnight, Community Capacities and Community Necessities, Opening remarks July 8, 2009 at the "From Clients to Citizens Forum, Coady International Institute, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia

To begin this process, we need to ask three questions: 1) what are the things that only residents can do, 2) what are the things that residents and institutions can accomplish together, as co-producers and, 3) what are the things that only institutions can do. If we are going to unlock the power of resident engagement, institutions must lead by stepping back, creating space for residents to be involved as producers of their own and their community's well-being.

Traditionally, individuals have been relegated to one role; that of a recipient of service, a client or a patient. As clients, residents are objects of service, dependent on the professionals and institutions for their overall well-being. However, to unlock the power of community, we need to utilize the skills and resources of the people we serve. We must expand their roles beyond that of a client. They also may be an advisor, providing input to help institutions provide a better level of service directed towards individuals in the community. However, there is a third role, and the most valuable, that of a co-producer of their own and their community's well-being. We need residents to become involved and provide input so that we can improve services and policies. More importantly we need to ask residents, "What can they contribute? How can they use what they already have to achieve what they need?"

It should be noted; in effective systems residents at times will play all three roles. For example, if someone breaks their leg they need to be viewed as a client/patient, if someone has particular knowledge about their neighborhood and its residents they should help to advise an agency on how to most effectively serve the neighborhood and/or to define what services the neighborhood actually wants. However, the most effective way to address the issues confronting us today encourages residents to become co-producers. The most effective solutions will include their resources and their gifts.

## *The Three Questions we must ask*

**What are the things that only residents can do?**

**What are the things that residents can do with help?**

**What are the things that only institutions can do?**

**This becomes the basis for strategy development**



Another way to explain the concept of resident engagement is to focus on the difference between care and service. Both concepts are needed to “turn the curve.” Care is what residents offer. Care is provided when residents become engaged and share their assets and/or resources, working collectively for the common good in their neighborhood or community. Service, on the other hand, is what institutions and professionals offer as a means of addressing the problems of an individual or community. Both care and service are required to build a better community that focuses on the goals of education, income and health. The role of an effective United Way should be to support the concept of resident engagement, while at the same time working to enhance the services delivered by the institutional partners. United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona’s Neighbors Care Alliance exemplifies the difference between care and service.

The goal of the Neighbor’s Care Alliance is to help seniors living alone in the community remain in their own homes longer, thereby avoiding higher cost services and institutionalization. It is based on the concept of neighbors providing care to seniors living alone in their neighborhood. United Way, in partnership with one of its agencies, developed a process to train neighborhood residents to:

1. Identify the seniors living alone in their neighborhood
2. Identify neighboring residents who have a passion for caring for seniors and
3. Asking them to care for the seniors living alone.

Through this process, residents in the neighborhood provide care to seniors living alone by checking on them daily, bringing an occasional meal, shopping for them or taking them shopping, taking them to their doctor’s appointments or simply doing minor repairs for them.

This simple act of caring does not require professional services; it is a low-cost or no-cost solution that enables seniors to live in their own homes longer. Neighbors caring for one another also stretch the resources of institutions by enabling agencies to focus their limited resources on the critical services that only institutions can provide, for example medically required services. Without the care provided by neighbors, the alternative is the service model which is dependent on funding and fees and without adequate funding many seniors would not receive the support they need to stay in their own homes.

### *Strong local communities share these characteristics:*

- They first look internally (e.g., at their own resources ) to solve their problems
- Relationships are viewed as powerful assets
- They have a good sense of their assets, strengths and resources, not just of what they need
- Their leaders open doors and connect residents to help them act collectively for the common good
- Their residents are engaged and informed
- The people in the community take responsibility for their own and their community’s well-being.

## UNITED WAYS' ROLE

Two key roles that United Ways can play to achieve their long-term goals are to support the increased engagement of residents by encouraging the work of neighborhood grassroots leaders, and to collaborate with institutions to recognize and more effectively utilize the power and resources of resident engagement.

The work of the grassroots leaders/organizers is to mobilize the residents of a neighborhood or community to share their individual gifts through the simple acts of **identifying, asking and connecting**. Their role should be to:

1. Identify individuals in their neighborhood or community and the skills (gifts) they possess
2. Ask them to share their individual gifts, and
3. Encourage them to connect with other individuals who have the same passions to work collectively for the common good.

For example, identify the five people who care about the economic viability of their neighborhood and connect them so they can work together.

*The effective framework to “turn the curve” must include citizen action, neighborhood action and institutions doing those things only they can do and stepping back to create space for citizen and community action.*

### **Principles to support effective resident engagement and institutional action:**

- We must have an unrelenting belief that everyone has gifts that can be shared to build a stronger neighborhood or community.
- Relationships build a community. We need to take the time to build relationships as the first step in engaging residents.
- A citizen-centered organization is the key to community engagement. To effectively engage residents they need to be involved from the beginning to provide input and direction to the effort; not merely to provide input after the plan has been developed.
- Leaders involve others as active members of the community. Effective leaders connect people with the same passions to work collectively for the common good.

- Everyone cares about something and what they care about is their motivation to act.
- Listening discovers passions and gifts. The simple process of asking questions rather than giving answers invites stronger participation and engagement.
- Identify, Ask and Connect. The key to engagement is: 1) identifying the gifts (skills and abilities) and passions (the issues they care about) of the residents, 2) asking the residents to share their gifts to address the issue(s) they care about and 3) encouraging residents to connect with other individuals who have the same passion(s) to work collectively for greater impact.
- Institutions as servants. Intuitional leaders must recognize that they have reached their limits in problem-solving. To be effective in today's world they need the resources of the community and its residents to achieve the results the community needs.

The intersection of RBA and ABCD has the potential to assist large and small United Ways “turn the curve” and achieve measurable results in the areas of education, income and health. RBA provides a simple understandable framework to identify population results and their related indicators to drive collective action and the performance measures to track and improve individual programs and strategies. ABCD unlocks the resources in communities that are often neglected while providing direction for more effective institutional action.

If your United Way has begun the journey to align your resources around education, income and health, the building blocks of a good life you may want to explore, as a growing number of United Ways have, the power of “turning the curve” and increased community engagement through the intersection of RBA and ABCD. This intersection has the potential to unlock an abundance of resources to truly make a difference and change community conditions for all.



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