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Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way and Library Partners

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Overview of Concepts

About the Course

Managing for Sustainability 400, taught by Dr. Eric Martin, is a management consulting course that exposes Junior and Senior students to topics within organizational development and change. The hands-on experiential learning offered in this course prompts students to draw on and integrate knowledge, skills, and experiences they have gained from their core, major, and relevant courses throughout their time at Bucknell. For one semester, students work in small teams of 3-4 people to develop, organize, and manage significant consulting projects that aim to serve organizations in the local Susquehanna Valley area.

Introduction to United Way

For over 125 years, United Way has worked to achieve their mission of advancing the common good by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world. By providing the foundations of education, health and financial stability, the organization strives to see a world where individuals have the opportunity to succeed and communities have the resources to thrive. Within the 1,800 local offices worldwide, United Way collaborates with approximately 2.8 billion volunteers a year to help communities and individuals achieve their human potential through education, financial stability and healthy lifestyles. Within the United States alone, there are 1,200 offices dedicated to promoting social change in their local communities.

Impact Statement of United Way Worldwide

"Problems. The ones most people don't have the stomach for. The ones nobody talks about at cocktail parties. The ones that can't be solved. We go looking for them. We have one life. To live better, we must Live United."

1,200 Offices in the USA   2.8 Billion Volunteers   1,800 Total Offices

Introduction to the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way:
The Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way (GSVUW) tackles issues of health, education, and financial stability for communities in Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties in central Pennsylvania. The organization utilizes programs that focuses on the collection of data to measure the success and long-term change related to the following six community-identified issues: **Transportation, Quality Early Childhood Education, Diversity and Inclusion, Behavioral Health and Addiction, Financial Stability and Teens.**

How to Read
This report is meant to help facilitate discussions within the GSVUW board, community impact committee and GSVUW partners on the different ways collective impact can be leveraged in the community. As a collective impact non-profit, UW has an opportunity to engrain the five pillars into all of its operations and bold goals. This document highlights the ways UW is currently doing this for their seven library partners; it also outlines new actions UW can take to further engrain collective impact in those libraries. The hope is that this can spark meaningful discussions and direct the organization to make positive changes within their relationships with the library partners. We imagine the library partners to serve as a pilot for change that may be useful with partners in other bold goal arenas.

Breakdown of Collective Impact
Solving the various issues that face the communities in Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties is no easy task. To effectively and strategically addresses the issues at hand, United Way utilizes Collective Impact as a framework to guide partner organizations to work together in a purposeful and systematic way. Collective Impact allows for increased community involvement and can lead to powerful results.

According to Harvard Business School professors, John Kania and Mark Kramer, "collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants". The Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way deems collective impact as a major focus among their partner organizations, and aim to create value by working together with partners.

Understanding Collective Impact (CI):

Creating a Common Agenda
All stakeholders in a collective impact initiative need to have a shared understanding of the problem at hand in order to align their efforts towards to a joint vision for change. The backbone organization unifies the different stakeholders behind a collective strategy for change by creating a sense of urgency around an underlying issue in the community, in this case, early childhood education.

- **GSVUW Current Efforts:** United Way has done a strong job of creating a shared vocabulary focused on outcomes, measurements and the ECE facilitation among their library partners and their board members. The prioritization of outcomes over outputs among all stakeholders is promising, as it reveals that everyone is driven towards creating identifiable change in their communities. The library partners are also well-versed on the United Way bold goals; they are focused on promoting kindergarten readiness and adopting teen development programs.
- Even though the library partners have adopted the necessary vocabulary surrounding outcomes and shared measurements, many still do not know how to properly track outcome data. We saw a range of measurement tools being used across the five library partners that we spoke to. Many have shared suggestions in regards to standardizing and improving GSVUW efforts, which we will address later in this report.

Shared Measurement System
Implementing a shared measurement system is an essential aspect of any CI initiative as it allows for accountability and data tracking across the board. According to Collective Impact expert, Mark Cabaj, "shared measurement systems encourage local organizations to align their efforts on shared outcomes, enable them to collectively track and evaluate their collective progress (or lack of) and offer organizations opportunities to benchmark their results against – and learn from – their peers."

- **GSVUW Current Efforts:** The ECE team at GSVUW has been working on a standardized measurement tool for kindergarten readiness that all library partners could utilize. The tool acts as a survey that program directors can fill out once they complete a session. We have learned though that only two of the library partners have expressed any interest in learning more about the tool being created. It is crucial that all the library partners become involved in the process of creating this tool, since they will have to agree upon using it in the future. Giving library partners the opportunity to provide input during the creation of a shared measurement tool is not only a reputable display of trust, but promotes the underlying theme of collaboration that is essential in a successful CI initiative.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities
Coordinating the unique tasks amongst a group of diverse stakeholders is a challenging yet significant role of the backbone organization. It is imperative that partner organizations are not competing with one another, rather that their efforts reinforce and support one another. Thus, GSVUW ensures that the responsibilities of their library partners, board members and GSVUW in itself do not overlap one another, but rather build and work in fruition with each other.

- **GSVUW Current Efforts:** United Way works to maintain their role as the "stewards" of the communities money by entrusting donors with optimal allocation decisions focused on hitting the bold goals in the community. Specifically, GSVUW has created an efficient allocation method focused on tracking outcomes and providing partners with funding based on both need and utility.
- Likewise, we have noted that GSVUW provides library partners with the freedom to facilitate ECE and accomplish bold goal requirement via unique programming developed by the program directors themselves. However, based on our discussions with library partners, our team has identified opportunities where GSVUW can better align their library partners with their bold goals via standardized programming and standard outcome measurements. By standardizing measurements and potentially programs (two ideas we will discuss in detail later in the report), we feel the grant allocation committee can make even better calculated funding decisions that will promote the United Way mission and collective impact initiative.

Continuous Communication
Continuous communication is key in uniting all stakeholders with a common vision and plan of action, as its builds trust among the different levels of an organization. Engaging in face-to-face meetings with partners shows a vested interest in the collective success of the mission as it grants the opportunity to provide feedback and promotes accountability.

- **GSVUW Current Effort:** GSVUW has promoted continuous communication amongst library partners by providing them with a powerful network that not only gives them access to new donors, but also gives them an opportunity to connect with other ECE facilitators. In turn, many library partners, especially those geographically close to each other, have maintained a constant line of communication to ask each other questions, share fundraising information or to seek guidance from one another. On the other hand, after interviewing library representatives, we believe that the library partners do not have a platform where they can meet in person to collaborate and share best practices, which is an essential part of a collective impact model as it aligns the shared vision of the library partners.

Backbone Organization

A backbone organization is necessary in any collective impact initiative as it plays the role of supporting, facilitating and managing all participants. The backbone organization helps create the agenda for impact and ensures all participants are staying align with goals through active communication.

Responsibilities of the Backbone Organization:

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BACKBONE ORGANIZATION:

1. Guide vision and strategy
2. Support aligned activities
3. Establish shared measurement practices
4. Build public will
5. Advance policy
6. Mobilize funding

GSVUW Current Efforts:

GSVUW has driven the vision of supporting the bold goals and aligning its partners around activities and outcomes that benefit the community. The next step for GSVUW as the backbone organization is to establish a shared measurement system so they can hold partners accountable by tracking and comparing data. By focusing the shared vision on outcomes and by providing partners with a shared measurement system, we feel GSVUW can enhance collective impact among its partners.

United Way has a powerful presence in the Greater Susquehanna Valley area. They are viewed by many as the 'stewards' of the community donations. At the local level, GSVUW is responsible for aligning their agenda and programs with the community needs and has done so with the library partners by tackling early childhood education and improving third grade literacy rates. On a regional level, GSVUW plays an important role in influencing policy decisions and ensuring best practices are adopted across the state. Finally, GSVUW mobilizes funding and directs donors to supporting the bold goals by connecting them to partners. GSVUW has provided library partners with a network of new donors and has created a sense of urgency behind early childhood education within the community.

Collective Impact Best Practices
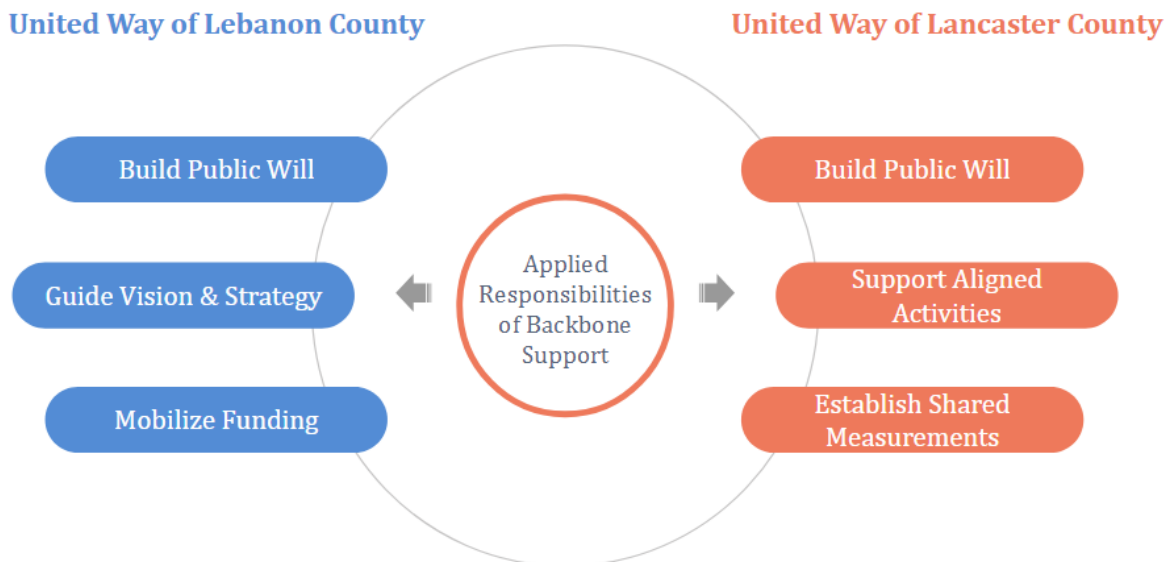
United Way Lebanon County

United Way of Lebanon County has supported their collective impact initiative by encouraging partners to collaborate through offering Live United grants.

> "A Live United grant is a one-time grant for programs and initiatives focused on education, financial stability, and/or health. Grants will be available only to efforts delivered to community members by two or more partnering organizations. The minimum grant award is $500. Grants will not exceed $5,000."

Adding Value as the Backbone Organization

Guide Vision and Strategy	The UW Lebanon County 'Live United Grant' reaffirms the shared focus on positive collaboration and partnerships that help achieve their bold goals.
Mobilize Funding	The Live United Grant mobilizes and directs funding towards three major priorities in the community: education, financial stability and health. The Live United Grant also encourages partners to collaborate with members/organizations in the community,

	which improves United Way's reputability to valuable donors.
Build Public Will	The Live United Grant is an exemplary form of backbone support as it empowers partners to collaborate by providing them with a new funding source. In turn, UW Lebanon County is showing the community that it is truly committed to achieving their bold goals.

United Way Lancaster County

The United Way of Lancaster County began their collective impact initiative in 2015 when they focused on empowering their partners and resolving broken relationships and conflicts. The Collective Impact team at UW Lancaster County has traced their collective impact efforts annually in order to best asses their growing impact in the community. Having read through the report, we noted some impressive changes UW Lancaster County has made as the backbone organization that have resonated well with partners, and have promoted their collective impact goals.

Adding Value as the Backbone Organization

Supporting Aligned Activities	Partners have emphasized that they have been in greater communication with each other and have an open line with UW to address conflicts or to strategize with them.
Establish Shared Measurements	The year three report highlights that "the partnerships believe shared measurement practices are now established" (2018). The establishment of shared measurements has made it easier for partners to collaborate as evident by the rise in partner projects.
Build Public Will	UW Lancaster County has truly mended its relationship with the community and partners by giving them a platform to provide feedback and share their thoughts. In doing so, UW Lancaster County not only has a better

> **OUR COMMUNITY WILL BE STRONGEST WHEN EVERY MEMBER HAS THEIR BASIC NEEDS MET, IS HEALTHY IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE, AND IS EMPOWERED TO PURSUE THEIR OWN PERSONAL GROWTH AND GOALS.**

understanding of the community needs, but is also able to provide greater support in helping their partners tackle these issues.

Relaying trust and empowerment as a reliable backbone organization
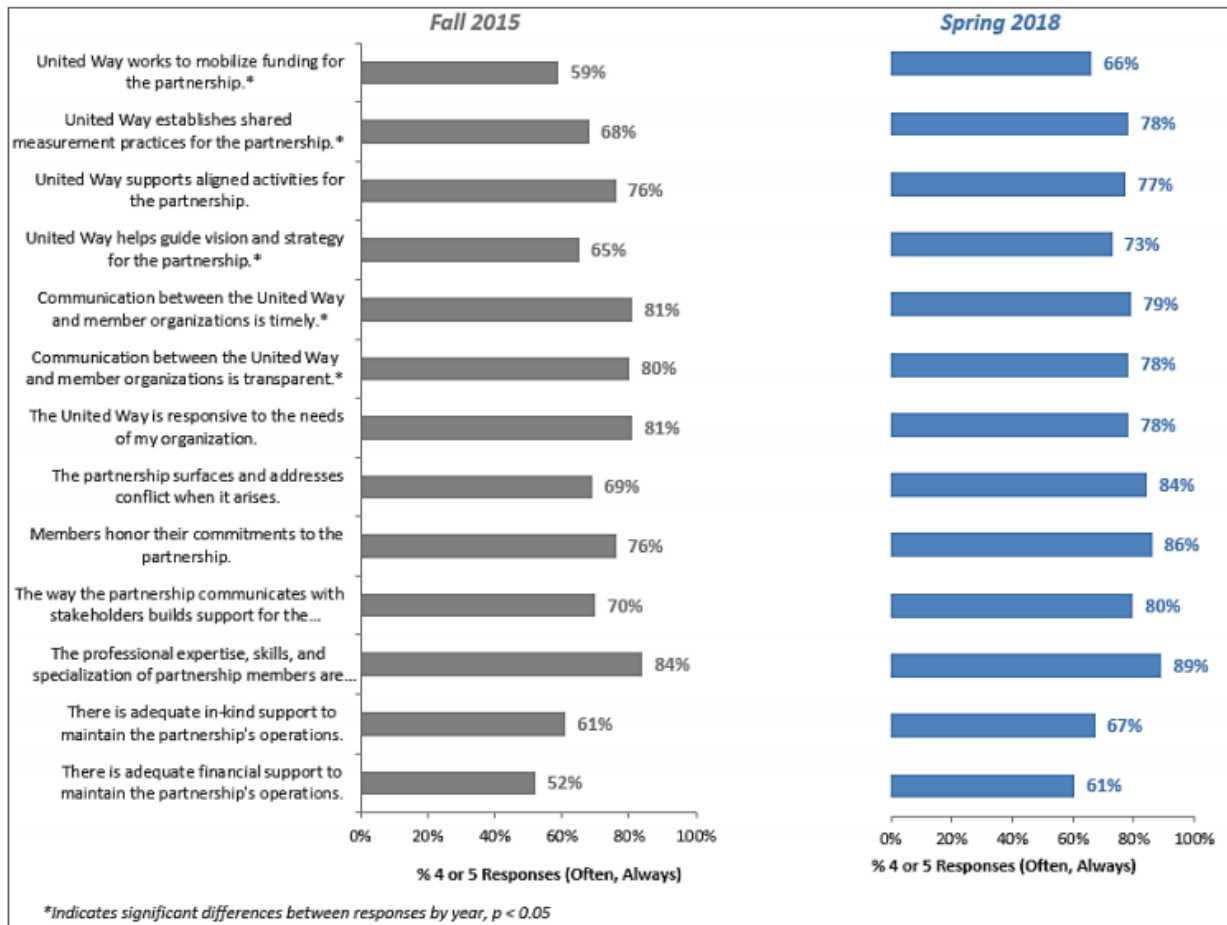
Figure 4. Backbone Organization

Methodology

Over the course of four months, our team worked closely with the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way to best understand their needs and to share potential opportunities to apply collective impact in exciting new ways.

Week 1-4

Before working with United Way directly, our team focused on class assignments that enhanced our understanding of academic and consulting literature concerning organizational change, organizational development, shared value and collective impact. We read case studies, articles in Harvard Business Review and reports from past Institute for Leadership in Technology and Management (ILTM) teams who also worked with United Way. Once we had the foundational knowledge of consulting methods and practices, we were introduced to the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way.

Within our first four weeks in the Management 400 course and working with United Way, our team spent time researching and orienting ourselves with United Way nationally and locally. Since United Way is a collective impact organization, it was essential for our team truly grasp the purpose of collective impact. Additionally, as management and economics majors, we had very little understanding of early childhood education. Therefore, we scheduled meetings with Bucknell professors in the Education Department and read research articles to orient ourselves with the subject. Lastly, we spent some time meeting with Joanne Solneem in Early Childhood Education at United Way and Stacey Piecuch as the Director of Community Impact and Development. Joanne and Stacey played a crucial role in guiding our ideas and supporting our team throughout the semester.

PROCCESS TIMELINE

Understand GSVUW and Collective Impact (week 1-4)

Initiated meetings with GSVUW team members to better understand their organization. Collective Impact, Early childhood education and NGO literature review.

Interviewed Libraries (week 4- 9)

Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library
Snyder Library,
Shamokin Library,
Degenstein Library,
Public Library for Union County

Outline Opportunity (week 9-11)

Coded our interviews with UW and the libraries.

Identified three opportunities for United Way to promote collective impact

Feedback with Clients (week 11-13)

Interviewed United Way board members in order to see where synergies can be aligned.

Held another round of meetings with GSVUW team to get feedback on the feasibility of our ideas.

Capitalizing on Opportunity (week 13-16)

Recoded the interviews with a focus on communication, program standardization and the grant process
Created final report with recommendations for promoting collective impact

Weeks 4-9

Once we gained a general understanding of the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way, our team visited and interviewed five out of the seven libraries, board members and United Way members to help us better understand how each stakeholder can align with the GSVUW collective impact model. When interviewing stakeholders, we asked a specific set of questions dealing with the different aspects collective impact. This allowed us to standardize and code the their responses. In order to maintain confidentiality and to receive candid responses, we decided to keep all quotes and responses from stakeholders anonymous in this report. Each stakeholder shared insights on how they believed libraries and GSVUW can leverage their synergies to promote collective impact in the community.

Weeks 9-13

After conducting interviews, we analyzed the results from the interviews by compiling the data and finding similarities and differences between various quotes. We used a visual tool called gravity charts (further explained in the Interview Snapshots section of this report) to outline which quotes align with each of the five pillars of collective impact. Based on these charts, we found opportunities to implement collect impact in creative ways.

Weeks 13-16

In the final weeks of our semester, our team shared our findings and recommendations with Professor Martin and United Way. We worked closely with United Way to ensure that our ideas were feasible and aligned with United Way's interests. Our goal is to provide United Way with strongly supported, analytical and applicable initiatives to apply collect impact to their programs and operations.

Interview Snapshots

Interview Questions

1. What is your understanding of collective impact and GSVUW push towards outcomes over outputs?

2. Would you be open to using standardized measurements and programs?

3. What aspects of the grant process do you feel are beneficial, which have hindered you?

4. How is your relationship with the other library partners, do you meet often, communicate?

5. How can United better support your organization?

6. Why do the libraries need shared measurements to identify outputs?

7. Would you be open to using standardized measurements and programs?

8. How can the grant process be simplified to better promote collective impact?

9. How often do you meet with the library partners?

10. How does United Way support the library partners in non-monetary ways?

The visuals below represent a 'gravity chart'. This chart displays important quotes we received from all stakeholders (board members, library staff, and GSVUW staff). The closer the quote is to the solid circle, the more aligned that quote is to the collective impact ideal. The purpose of these visuals is to candidly highlight what stakeholders shared with us.

Continuous Communication Gravity Chart

"I feel like we don't always need to be the ones reaching out"

"Some programs are floundering for what to do"

"The libraries could really help Shamokin [library] move along"

"[UW] doesn't get us all together in a meeting anymore"

"Us libraries are not just out here floating; we try and work together"

Continuous Communication

"We need to help them collaborate and work together"

"We can help bring libraries new programming"

"We have meetings, the libraries aren't showing up"

"Libraries should meet... to talk about a universal measurement tool"

"I would love if the libraries could help each other"

"[UW] only hears about problems once a year, they are not coming to us"

This gravity chart shows quotes that relate to the collective impact ideal, continuous communication. Reading left to right, the first quote highlighted in orange is furthest away from continuous communication to illustrate an imbalance of 'reaching out' between the backbone organization, GSVUW, the partner organizations, and specifically the libraries. Looking at the second highlighted quote on the left, it is closest to the center circle because collaboration and working together lend themselves to continuous communication. The backbone support holding that as a goal increases the likelihood the collective impact ideal will happen.

Common Agenda Gravity Chart

"If [UW] has made these 5 bold goals their focus why do we have to justify on the application why we are trying to do this?"

"The libraries should fill a hole in a community"

"I feel like they are really pushing towards their own programs that compete with our programs"

Common Agenda

"Libraries are a good community space"

"[Libraries] are not just out here floating; we try to work together"

Through the interviews, we realized the library partners and GSVUW have a fairly similar understanding of the bold goals and community impact. Both highlighted quotes show how most stakeholders agree that the purpose of a library is to create a space for community members to come to. In our time with GSVUW and partners, we learned one of the more important parts of early childhood education was the information sharing that happens between
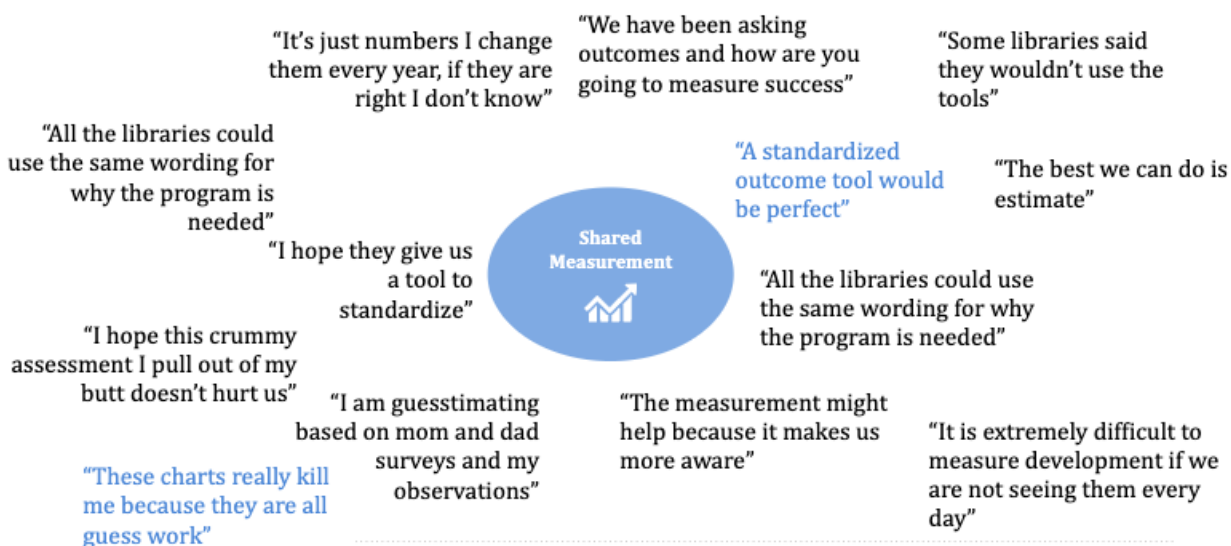
the parents of children participating in library programming. This outcome is not what we expected and we appreciated that both UW and the library partners understood that that immeasurable communication was another benefit to their programming.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities Gravity Chart

"There are some simple changes that would make both groups happy"

"If anything I would rather see the application shorter.. I just need to see if they are adequately funded"

"A shared measurement tool would make assessing the applicants simpler"

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

"The libraries could really help Shamokin [library] move along"

"I want to make it easier for the applicants because it will be easier for us"

"The measurements might help because it makes us more aware"

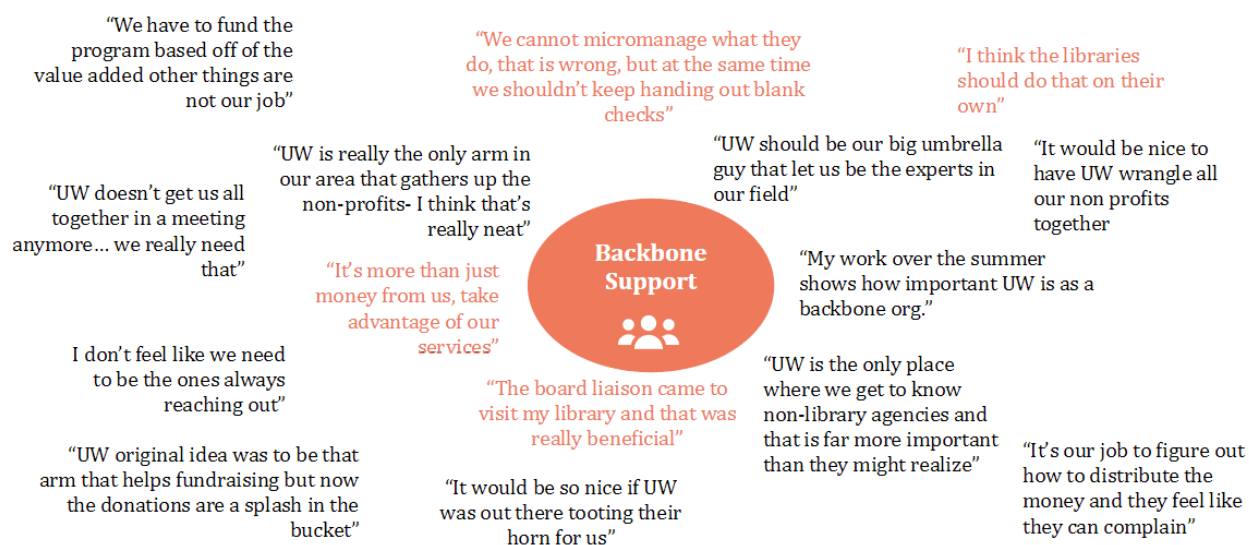This gravity chart emphasizes the ability for partners to help each other and that, in turn, helps the backbone organization. GSVUW staff and board members reflected the idea that a shorter grant application would be beneficial to all sides. There was also the idea that a shared measurement system would ease the program directors' work and ensure GSVUW had a uniform way to compare and contrast outcomes.

Shared Measurement Gravity Chart

"It's just numbers I change them every year, if they are right I don't know"

"We have been asking outcomes and how are you going to measure success"

"Some libraries said they wouldn't use the tools"

"All the libraries could use the same wording for why the program is needed"

"A standardized outcome tool would be perfect"

"The best we can do is estimate"

"I hope they give us a tool to standardize"

Shared Measurement

"I hope this crummy assessment I pull out of my butt doesn't hurt us"

"All the libraries could use the same wording for why the program is needed"

"I am guesstimating based on mom and dad surveys and my observations"

"The measurement might help because it makes us more aware"

"It is extremely difficult to measure development if we are not seeing them every day"

"These charts really kill me because they are all guess work"

GSVUW has shared with us that they have been working on a shared measurement tool for library partners to utilize. Our team had the opportunity to visit library partners to discuss the possible implementation of said tool. After speaking with library partners, we noticed many were confused about measuring outcomes or found their current process inaccurate, tedious and forced. The quotes furthest away from the center circle display this idea. We did notice however, that many library partners would be willing and excited to use a standardized measurement tool.

Backbone Support Gravity Chart

"We have to fund the program based off of the value added other things are not our job"

"We cannot micromanage what they do, that is wrong, but at the same time we shouldn't keep handing out blank checks"

"I think the libraries should do that on their own"

"UW is really the only arm in our area that gathers up the non-profits- I think that's really neat"

"UW should be our big umbrella guy that let us be the experts in our field"

"It would be nice to have UW wrangle all our non profits together

"UW doesn't get us all together in a meeting anymore... we really need that"

"It's more than just money from us, take advantage of our services"

Backbone Support

"My work over the summer shows how important UW is as a backbone org."

I don't feel like we need to be the ones always reaching out"

"The board liaison came to visit my library and that was really beneficial"

"UW is the only place where we get to know non-library agencies and that is far more important than they might realize"

"It's our job to figure out how to distribute the money and they feel like they can complain"

"UW original idea was to be that arm that helps fundraising but now the donations are a splash in the bucket"

"It would be so nice if UW was out there tooting their horn for us"

These quotes are a direct portrayal of the ways GSVUW is successfully acting as a backbone support organization. It also highlights the areas for improvement within that role. Some of the effective ways GSVUW is providing support are through their board liaison

programs, their onboarding process, and the ability for members to connect through networking events. Some areas of improvement, as mentioned in the quotes above, relate to the balance of micromanaging and accountability of partner organization. Additionally, some of the quotes that are further away from center highlight opportunities for GSVUW to reflect on their current efforts as a backbone organization.

Analysis and Recommendations

Our team spent weeks 4-9 meeting with stakeholders and listening to their feedback, concerns and ideas in regards to their partnership with GSVUW. After reviewing all of interview data collected from these meetings, we organized specific quotes according to their relation to each of the five pillars of collective impact. We then used this data to discover potential opportunities to apply collect impact to GSVUW operations and programs.

Through the conversations with stakeholders and the analysis of all the interview data, we noticed that some of the most common things discussed included the length of the grant process and the difficulty of measuring outcomes. Some of the quotes that highlighted the grant process include, "If anything I would rather see the application shorter", "I want to make it easier for the applicants because it will be easier for us". In regards to measuring outcomes, some stakeholders said, "It's just numbers I change them every year, if they are right I don't know", "These charts really kill me because they are all guess work" and "I am guesstimating based on mom and dad surveys and my observations".

Another commonality we found was the relationship between library partners and the GSVUW. The interview quotes revealed a disconnect between library partners and United Way when it came to each party's view on accountability and grant writing responsibilities. For example, some stakeholders said, "I think the libraries should do that on their own" and "I feel like we don't always need to be the ones reaching out", while others said, "We need to help them collaborate and work together" and "It would be so nice if UW was out there tooting their horn for us".

Based on these observations, we developed three potential ideas that GSVUW could use to further apply collective impact while addressing the major areas of discussion of stakeholders:
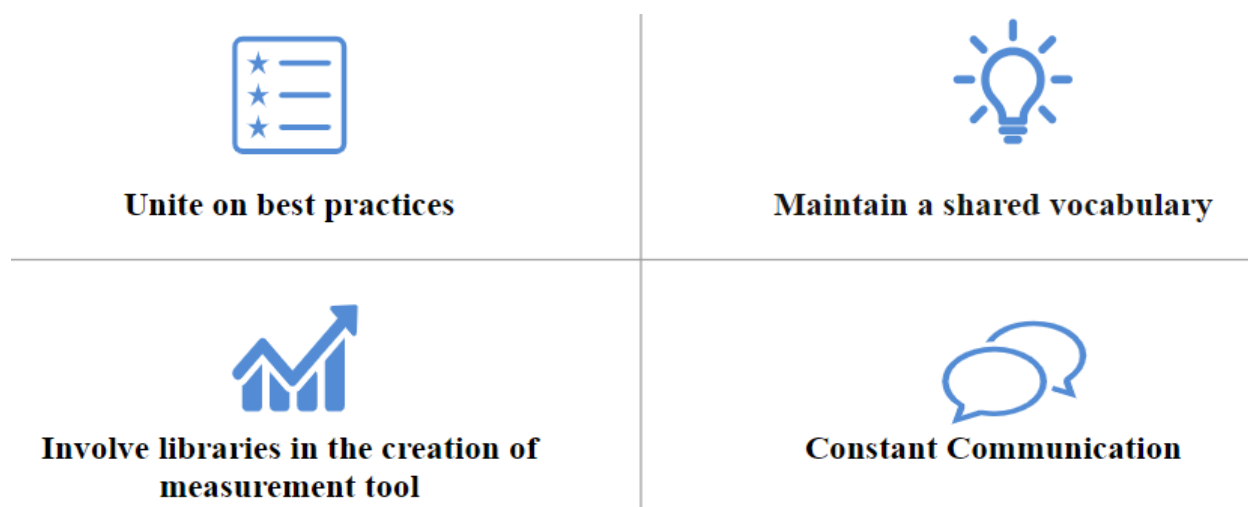
1. **Facilitate library communication**: Develop opportunities and spaces for library partners to share ideas and concerns amongst themselves throughout the year.
2. **Standardization of programs**: Create a skeleton of a early childhood education program for library partners to use and personalize.
3. **Simplify the grant process**: Remove aspects of the grant process to shorten the application for both applicants and the board who reviews each grant.

We believe that these three initiatives can be implemented individually or in sequence to apply and add aspects of collective impact to the GSVUW operations and programs. Each initiative can

be impactful when implemented independently, however, there is value in each idea being implemented over time as they would reinforce one another to further enhance the benefits of collective impact. For example, by facilitating communication, library partners can discuss programs which will help with the standardization of programs. Standardizing programs can help make the grant process easier by making a standard and simpler application for those standard programs.

In the next phase of this report, we will discuss the specific ways each initiative drives the five pillars of collective impact. Additionally, we will share three specific ways, ranging from simple, intermediate and significant levels of difficulty, in which the GSVUW could reach the three main initiatives (facilitating library partner communication, standardizing programs and simplifying the grant process).

Facilitate Intra-Partner Communication

Unite on best practices

Maintain a shared vocabulary

Involve libraries in the creation of measurement tool

Constant Communication

Common Agenda:

    Frequent communication is key in maintaining a common agenda as it ensures that partners are still focused on achieving the GSVUW bold goals. Through facilitating greater inter-partner communication, library partners can share best practices and unite on a vision for success. Likewise, increased communication gives library partners the opportunity to discuss concerns and provide feedback to GSVUW so that they can best support their partners.

    In our interviews, we learned that many of the library partners have a strong understanding of the GSVUW ECE agenda; however, they are not unified on a set of best practices. Particularly, there is a range of understanding on how to best measure and track outcomes. For instance, we learned that some program directors send out a parent survey, while

other have the program director record their observations. By providing library partners with a space to communicate, we feel that they can agree on efficient measurement tools and best practices for programs.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities:

Facilitating greater partner communication will support GSVUW's current efforts in creating a shared vocabulary among their partners. As mentioned earlier, the library partners have adopted the language surrounding outcomes and measurements, and have aligned their focus with the GSVUW early childhood education strategy. However, some of the library partners do not understand the true value of measuring outcomes, which needs to be established in order to promote collective impact.

In our interviews we noted a few quotes that capture the mutually reinforcing value of partner communication, such as one library telling us that "we can help bring new libraries programming, help them collaborate and work together". Another mentioned, "the libraries can really help Shamokin [library] move along". By providing the library partners with a platform to communicate, they can truly collaborate and help each other achieve their ECE goals.

GSVUW also benefits from empowering library partners to communicate and share best practices as it will foster a collaborative and efficient approach towards facilitating ECE in the community.

Shared Measurement System:

Establishing a shared measurement system is a crucial aspect of any collective impact initiative and it is imperative that all stakeholders agree on the system. Currently, Joanne Sloneem and the ECE team are working to create a standardized "KEI Best Practice Tool" that all the library partners can implement. In our interviews with the library partners, we learned that many of them were open to adopting a standardized measurement tool, and wanted to become more involved in the creation of this tool. Having looked at the 'rough' version of the "KEI Best Practice tool", we noted many commonalities with the measurement tools the library partners were using. For instance, many of the library partners also ask questions surrounding child behavior, such as "following directions", "says first name" and "maintains eye contact". The input of the library partners in the creation of the "KEI Best Practice" is crucial not only because they can provide a valuable perspective, but since they will be the ones using it.

In our interviews we learned that the GSVUW team reached out to the library partners to partake in creating the tool, but that only two library partners showed interest. The fact that the library partners have not responded to the ECE team embodies the current disconnect between the libraries and GSVUW. However, based on our stakeholder interviews, the library partners would be interested in creating a new standardized tool. By creating a new platform for library partners to get involved with the creation of the tool and collaborate with one another, we believe that library partners may be more inclined to work with GSVUW to establish and utilize a new standard measurement tool that all stakeholders agree upon.

Constant Communication:

       Naturally, facilitating inter-partner communication stimulates the constant communication of stakeholders that is key in a collective impact initiative. The increased communication of partners, particularly those tackling the same bold goal [Libraries-ECE] is the first step towards ushering a collaborative environment that promotes frequent conversation (Kania, 2011).

       In our interviews with library partners, a few noted that GSVUW used to provide them with a space where they could speak in person, share best practices and network. Specifically, one librarian shared that, "[UW] doesn't get us all together in a meeting anymore." Face-to-face meetings are extremely valuable in a collective impact initiative as it encourages partners to collaborate and allows them to hold each other accountable. The minimal contact and communication occurring between the library partners explains their lack of responsiveness to learning about the KEI tool, and needs to be resolved in order to truly enact collective impact.

       All of the library partners we spoke with emphasized that they would like to meet with each other to learn what types of programs and measurements tools the other library partners are using. Creating the opportunity for library partners to participate in face-to-face meetings can help unify the them and empower them to get involved in the creation of the measurement tool. In our recommendations, we will go more on depth in how GSVUW can best facilitate inter-partner communication.

Backbone Organization:

       The first three responsibilities of a backbone organization is to guide the vision, support aligned activities and establish a shared measurement system with the aim of promoting collective impact. These three responsibilities of the backbone organization share a central theme in that they require constant involvement and feedback from partners, unlike external tasks such as advancing policy and mobilizing funding. Thus, it is vital that GSVUW initiates greater inter-partner communication as it is the first step in creating a collaborative and united community that is needed in a collective impact initiative. Facilitating inter-partner communication will primarily support the activities of the library partners as it will empower them to share best practices, work together on grants/programs and unite on shared measurements. By supporting the communication of the library partners, GSVUW will reap, "the rewards of learning and solving problems together with others who shared their same deep knowledge and passion about the issue" (Kania, 2011)

Recommendations for Facilitating Inter-Partner Communication:

Simple Change:
GSVUW can increase the engagement of library partners by creating an email chain where they can share information.

Value Added:
Provides library partners with an opportunity to share best practices and information about their programs

Benefit for GSVUW:
Library partners can help one another, especially with the onboarding process

Create an Email chain

Creating an email chain among the library partners would be a simple and beneficial first step GSVUW can take towards facilitating greater partner communication. An email chain will provide partners with an opportunity to communicate, share ideas, ask question and better engage with one another. We noted in our discussion that the library partners are interested in learning more about one another. An email chain can be a platform where program directors can speak about their programs, outcomes and fundraisers. Through greater online communication, the library partners can begin to rebuild their relationship with each other and with GSVUW.

Intermediate Change:
GSVUW promotes a bi-annual meeting where library partners have a platform to discuss and collaborate face-to-face.

Value Added:
Provide library partners with the opportunity to learn how other partners are measuring outcomes and the types of programs they are running

Builds relationship among libraries that becomes the basis for future partnerships on grants/programs

Benefit for GSVUW:
Meeting face-to-face allows for the library partners to hold each other accountable

Library partners can use this meeting to come to agreement on best practices and an established measurement tool

Promote Bi-annual meeting

An intermediate change that GSVUW can make as the backbone organization is to promote a bi-annual meeting among the library partners. While an email chain will jumpstart inter-partner communication, it does not lead to the intangible benefits that come from in person interactions. Bringing all the library partners together into the same room will push them to collaborate and build valuable relationships as it shows that GSVUW is vested in their group success. In turn, the library partners will be empowered to hold one another accountable as they have a better understanding of best practices, and how other partners are measuring outcomes.

As mentioned earlier, we understand that GSVUW has tried to bring the library partners together for meetings in the past, including those dealing with the KEI Best Practice Tool. Thus, it is imperative that GSVUW promotes this bi-annual meeting as a new/fresh meeting that is spearheaded by the program directors themselves. GSVUW should emphasize that the library partners should lead this meeting themselves and that the agenda should focus on what they find valuable, such as outcome measurements, or fundraising. By letting library partners manage and facilitate their meetings, they will be more inclined to collaborate and establish a shared measurement tool as they are given more trust and responsibility. Speaking in person and seeing how other library partners measure outcomes will push the program directors to come together and unite on key measurements that GSVUW can then incorporate into their ongoing KEI Best Practice tool. Letting the library partners discuss and come to terms on specific measurements in person is also much more efficient than having them converse over an email chain where it is tough to come to an agreement.
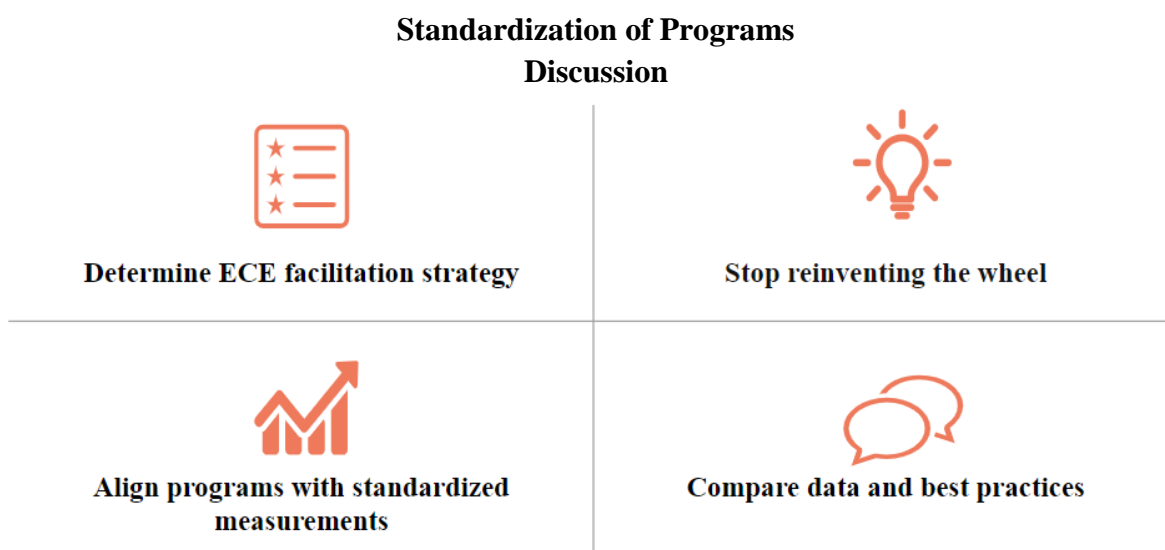

Sponsor & set agenda for meeting

Significant Change:
GSVUW optimizes the valuable time the partners have together by sponsoring and setting the agenda for the meeting.

Value Added:
Coordinates the agenda of the library partners with the greater GSVUW collective impact vision

Empowers library partners to attend and partake in the collaborative collective impact initiative as GWVUW

Benefit for GSVUW:
GSVUW directs agenda and vision towards community needs and priorities.

Transcends GSVUW relationship with library partners

GSVUW can transcend their relationship with the library partners by sponsoring and setting the agenda for the bi-annual meeting. The act of organizing and funding a meeting for library

partners to come together and communicate in person affirms that GSVUW is devoted to supporting the ECE goals of the community. By setting the agenda of the meeting, GSVUW can ensure that the library partners' activities are still in alignment with the greater United Way bold goals and community needs. For instance, GSVUW can hold a meeting focused on discussing the value of outcomes, where library partners can provide their valuable input with the aim of coming to agreement on a shared tool. Also, sponsoring the meeting incentives the partners to attend, and put in greater effort in building a relationship with each other as they all desire support and backing from GSVUW.

In his "Collective Impact" article John Kania (2011) stresses that "coordination takes time, and none of the participating organizations has any to spare. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it [collective impact] fails." Thus it is role of the backbone organization to lead the collective impact initiative by aligning and supporting the tasks of all stakeholders, and driving them to communicate and collaborate so that they can strategically facilitate ECE in the community.

Standardization of Programs
Discussion

Determine ECE facilitation strategy

Stop reinventing the wheel

Align programs with standardized measurements

Compare data and best practices

Common Agenda:

From the interviews with various stakeholders, we know that the mission of library partners and the way it connects to GSVUW is clear. Many stakeholders mentioned that the libraries are positive community spaces and serve as a place for children to grow. One component of common agenda that could be refined is the unification of partners and the joint approach to problems. A standardized measurement tool and/or standardized programs could ensure that both GSVUW and the library partners are solving ECE problems together and in the same way.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities:

A standardization process would be beneficial to both the library partners and GSVUW because it will reduce the amount of work for all stakeholders. One way it will do this is by ensuring the library partners do not have to reinvent the wheel every time they want to start a new program. This will save time, which can be utilized by the library staff for other activities they need to complete for their library. Standardized programs would also help the GSVUW staff and board members because it makes it easier to measure outcomes and compare the data of various libraries. The comparison could help flag library partners who are falling behind and may need extra guidance or draw attention to the ones who are constantly improving.

Shared Measurements:

This collective impact goal fits perfectly with our standardization tool/program idea as a standardized measurement tool is a form of shared measurement.

Continuous Communication:

A standardized program will encourage partners to reach out and talk to each other about best practices and program implementation.This recommendation will also encourage partners to reach out to UW about programs they are interested in borrowing or programs that they think would be a good addition to the list of ones that can be borrowed.

Backbone organization:

Creating a standardized program would be integral in positioning GSVUW as a leading backbone organization. A large incentive for this action is the viability it has within the onboarding process. After interviewing the library partners, we gathered that some are having a hard time coming up with new programs; specifically someone said, "The libraries could really help Shamokin [library] move along". If GSVUW were able to equip onboarding libraries in the community with standardized programs, the organization could have a more immediate impact. Mt. Caramel is a great example of a library that does not have the time or resources to come up with their own programming; rather, they would welcome any and all suggestions for potential programs especially if there was funding attached.

Recommendations

Simple Change:
UW, with the input of the library partners, will create and distribute a standardized measurement tool for early childhood education programs.

Value Added:
Eases the work of all stakeholders and allows for a more direct comparison process.

Benefit for GSVUW:
The comparison between libraries will be easier to understand and quantify if they are all using the same measurement tool

Create universal measurement tool

Simple

One of the easiest forms of standardization that could be implemented within the next year is a shared measurement tool for the libraries partners to use. We are aware this is already in the works within the GSVUW office and want to echo the importance this could have on easing the workload the library staff takes on. During our interviews, we asked the library representatives what measurement tool they are using, and many of them took out a very similar sheet of paper as the 'KEI Best Practice Tool'. Their measurements largely highlighted the specific behaviors that reflect if a pre-k student is ready for Kindergarten and when compared to the GSVUW KEI tool, they marked similar behaviors.

The previous recommendation emphasized intra-library communication as a way to further collective impact ideals. This GSVUW standardized measurement tool could be a great topic for the first meeting. As the backbone organization, it is important for GSVUW to make the library partners feel empowered, and a great way to do this would be by including them in the creation of the KEI tool.

Intermediate Change:
UW will create the skeleton of 2-3 early childhood education programs that can be utilized by their library partners.

Value Added:
The library partners don't need to 'reinvent the wheel' when it comes to programming.

Benefit for GSVUW:
This process will help with onboarding and could increase the number of programs some libraries are able to implement.

Implement 'Off The Shelf' programs for onboarding

Intermediate

GSVUW has a great opportunity to spearhead a program standardization process for their library partners. We imagine GSVUW could create two to three skeletons of early childhood education programs. Internally, GSVUW would choose a library program that they feel meets the gold standard of early childhood education. They would then attach outcomes to that program that align with community needs. Library partners would need to request the program and give a 500 word or less summary of why they feel this program would be beneficial and how they will implement it. Once the grant has been approved, the library partners will receive a guide of what the program contains, a timeline of activities, and a resource list. For the duration of the program, library partners would need to record the number, age, and demographic or children who attended each week. Lastly, when the program is completed, the library partner would write up a summary of how the implementation went and what they feel could be improved for next time. They will not need to justify outcomes because they will already be established and attached to the program. The implementation of these programs would not replace the grant process, rather it would simply give library partners new ideas to implement at any point in the year. As mentioned in the collective impact analysis, a standardized program could also greatly improve the onboarding process for new libraries struggling for material.
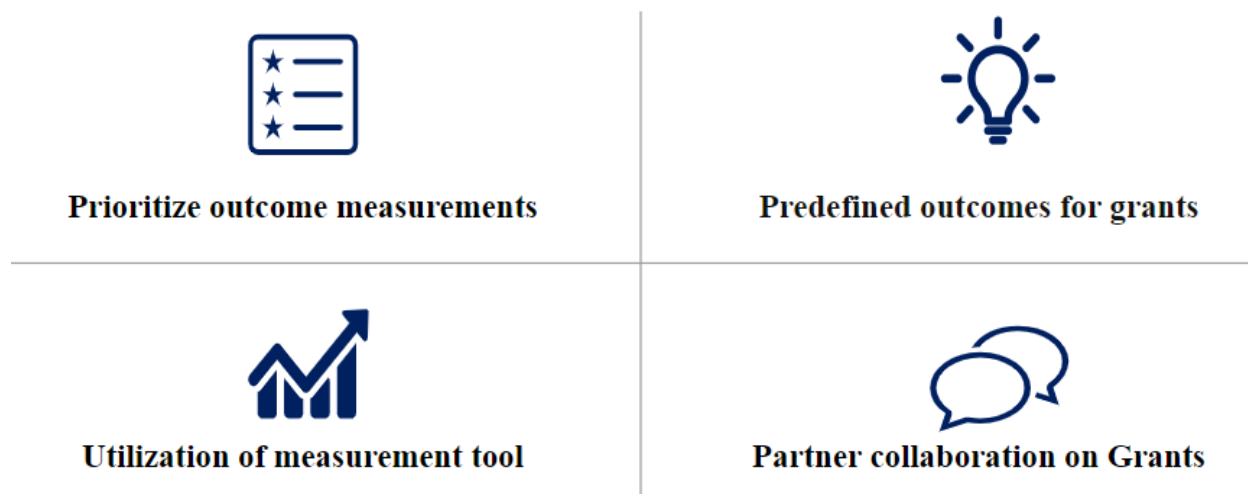
Monetize 'Off The Shelf' programs

Significant Change:
A library can select a program and said program will come with a specific amount of money.

Value Added:
Encourage the implementation of skeleton programs and reduce the work on the grant process

Benefit for GSVUW:
This would also help with onboarding and further establish the backbone organization as a reliable resource for the library partners to fall onto.

Significant

The significant change GSVUW could make is almost identical to the intermediate change, but with money attached to it. The backbone organization would create the skeleton programs with attached outcomes and have the same application process; however, each program would also have a dollar amount attached to it that would be the amount the library would need to hold said program. For example, if there were a summer reading program for toddlers as a

skeleton program GSVUW would allocate $3,000 to fund that program and the library partners would be able to fill out that short application for the program and receive immediate funding. It would aso mean that a library would have to fill out a less rigorous grant process as long as they select they will be taking an 'off the shelf' program.

Simplify the Grant Process:
Discussion:

Prioritize outcome measurements	**Predefined outcomes for grants**
Utilization of measurement tool	**Partner collaboration on Grants**

Common Agenda:

In regards to the grant process, we discovered from our interviews with library partners that many of them may not be fully convinced on the necessity of recording outcomes. Many believe that the grants pose too many questions and consider the process tedious. Mainly, library representatives feel as though their work in facilitating and promoting early childhood education within their communities is in itself a reason to receive United Way grant funding. Others shared with us in interviews that it was concerning to them that United Way requires grant writers to provide information that proves why library programming is valuable. Understandably, Library partners noted that they have their own board members who hold them accountable and some expressed that based on the requirements from United Way's grant process, the partners do not feel as though

On the other hand, having spoken with GSVUW board members, we understand the necessity for outcomes, as United Way is the "steward of the communities money". It is essential that the library partners also understand the value of outcomes, and their significance in tracking and comparing data. Thus, by removing unnecessary aspects of the grant, we believe United Way and the library partners can better align on the common agenda that is focused on outcome measurements.

This quote from a GSVUW team member encompasses what we believe should be the prime focus of the grant, "what's your target, the outcome, how are you gonna reach it,".

Prioritizing outcomes through simplifying the grant will align all stakeholders with this collective impact vision.

Shared Measurement System:

The streamlining of the grant process will also lead to a shared measurement system among the library partners, as they will have to use a standardized tool evaluate the outcomes of their programs. Having the library partners use a standardized measurement tool on the grant will make their operations much simpler as they have struggled to accurately measuring outcomes over outputs. Likewise, having standardized outcomes in the grant will make it much easier for GSVUW to allocate funds properly, since they can now efficiently track and compare the data.

In our interviews, we learned that all of the library partners are open to using a standardized measurement tool and would like to learn more about the tool that is currently being made. The overwhelming grant process for the library partners has discouraged them from reaching out to GSVUW to learn about outcomes and the new tool that is being made. We feel that simplifying the grant process will incentivize the library partners to prioritize outcomes and shared measurements as they will feel less stressed with reporting other information.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities:

The simplification of the grant process is intrinsically a mutually reinforcing activity, as it allows for all stakeholders to focus on the collective impact mission at hand. We learned through out interviews that most of the libraries do not have their own grant writer and working on United Way's grant takes a lot of time away from their everyday responsibilities. In the case of the library partners, a less extensive grant will let them focus on their programs that facilitate early childhood education. Streamlining the process will also make it easier for GSVUW to evaluate grants, as board members can now focus on comparable outcome data, rather than working through unnecessary information.

A powerful quote from our interviews that encapsulates the idea role of mutually reinforcing activities in promoting collective impact is, "if an organization only wants 4-5000 dollars, just give outcomes". Primarily, this quote emphasizes that there should be a single focus on outcomes in the grant, especially when library partners are asking for "light" funding. Program directors can now prioritize facilitating ECE and recording outcomes, while grant approvers can track and compare outcomes with greater ease.

Continuous Communication:

Through streamlining the grant process, we believe the library partners will partake in greater communication as they can work together to complete the grant. As the grant process becomes focused on standardized outcomes and measurements, we feel that the library partners will be more inclined to share information about best practices. In turn, the constant communication on best practices between libraries can aid in facilitating a relationship between partners. A positive relationship between library partners can encourage a culture of support in

which they help one another fill out grants, which would be a much simpler process if programs become standardized.

In her article for the Stanford Social Innovation Review, Lori Bartczak explores the intersection of the grant process and collective impact, where she emphasizes a need for constant communication. Particularly, she notes that the backbone organization needs to be in constant communication with grant writers, in order for all stakeholders to be aligned behind the shared vision towards outcome measurements (Bartczak, 2016). Thus, Bartczak finds it key that the grant process is one that is simple and dynamic, so that partners writing grants can share best practices with the aim of streamlining the process to prioritize outcomes .

Backbone Organization:

The streamlining of the grant process is a crucial step in converting a backbone organization from one that micromanages its partners, to one that supports and facilitates the collective impact of partners. As mentioned earlier, the grant process has become a clear source of tension between the library partners and GSVUW. We believe that simplifying the grant process will help GSVUW's reputation with their partners, who currently feel that they have been undermined. Removing some aspects of the grant and promoting greater communication/partnerships in the grant process will also relay trust to the library partners. In doing so, GSVUW will build their public will by truly showing the community and their partners that they are committed to promoting collective impact and achieving their bold goals.

United Way as the Backbone Organization:		
Backbone Responsibility:	Build Public Will
Added Value:	Relaying trust to partners
Benefits for GSVUW:	Improving reputability

**Recommendations
for Simplifying the Grant Process:**

Simple Change:
GSVUW can remove certain questions from the grant that are tough to record and/or are do not hold significant value in allocation decisions

Value Added:
Program directors can prioritize tracking outcomes

Relays trust and appreciation towards library partners

Reduce requirements holistically

Benefit for GSVUW:

Collective understanding and focus on tracking and comparing outcomes
Reinforces commitment to backbone support and ECE facilitation

Simplifying the grant process by removing certain questions/requirements is a powerful way of showing the library partners that GSVUW trusts them and is invested in their continued success. We learned in our interviews that all the library partners were all really grateful when GSVUW shortened their grant requirement a few years ago, and doing it again would show the libraries that the backbone organization is committed to supporting them. Reducing requirements in the grant process is solely an act of impression management. Particularly, removing unnecessary questions help direct the focus of the grant towards outcomes, which hold a significant weight in allocation decisions. By removing questions that take up a lot of library partners time (especially those who do not have grant writers), libraries can then prioritize their time on outcomes and focus on their everyday activities of facilitating ECE in the community instead of the grant application itself.

Implement 'off the shelf' programming with outcomes	**Intermediate Change:** GSVUW sets outcomes for previously discussed 'off the shelf' programs **Value Added:** library partners do not have to create their own outcomes, and can focus on serving ECE in the community **Benefit for GSVUW:** GSVUW directs vision for programs by aligning outcomes with community needs Predefined outcomes makes it easier to compare data during the allocation process

This recommendation builds on the previous intermediate recommendation by setting outcomes for the GSVUW 'off the shelf' programs. Ideally, GSVUW would offer partners two-three programs with attached outcomes that library partners can easily apply for. Standardizing programs and setting predefined outcomes will make it easier for GSVUW to track and compare data when it is time to make allocation decisions. Predefining outcomes also allows for GSVUW to direct the agenda of programs, while making life easier for library program directors, who have struggled with recording outcome data in the past. In turn, the incorporation of predefined outcomes in 'off the shelf' programs is a two fold solution that makes life easier for library partners, while coordinating programs to align with GSVUW bold goals and community needs.

Significant Change (Experimental):
GSVUW predefines outcomes for partners asking for less than $5,000 for grants coming outside the typical funding stream

Similar to Lebanon County 'Live United' Grant

Value Added:
Provides library partners with new opportunities to apply for funding

Incentivizes libraries to collaborate

Benefit for GSVUW:
GSVUW directs vision for programs by aligning outcomes with community needs

Impression Management by showing commitment to ECE funding and facilitation

Set outcomes for grants <$5,000

The significant change we recommend for GSVUW is an experimental one that we developed after our presentation to the GSVUW team. After our discussion, we now understand that our initial suggestion to set outcomes for grants that were $5,000 or less is not feasible as most of the library partners apply for grants that are a lot more than $5,000. Our new recommendation is that GSVUW could opens up a new source of funding during the year for grants below $5,000, similar to the Lebanon County United Way 'Live United Grant'.

This experimental recommendation could be one that GSVUW implements and tracks for a year in order to see if it is successful and plausible. If so, GSVUW can expand the program by allowing all partners to apply for grants outside of the typical funding stream. Ideally, as the GSVUW collective impact initiative grows, GSVUW can require partners to collaborate on these grants in order to receive funding outside the typical time frame, which is something the United Way of Lebanon County enforces.

By providing library partners with new funding streams, GSVUW is relaying to the them that they value and support their partner's work. Additionally, by setting outcomes for these grants, GSVUW can direct the agenda towards its bold goal priorities while also promoting collaboration aimed at facilitating ECE in the community. Providing partner with even greater funding is a big ask for a backbone organization. However, by developing an experimental model with just the libraries is a significant step that GSVUW can take in stimulating ECE facilitation in the community.

Summary of Findings

Applying Collective Impact to GSVUW Early Childhood Education

We believe that The "Applying Collective Impact to GSVUW Early Childhood Education" model effectively summarizes our findings in a simplified and structured model. The graphic aims to show how the three main initiatives (facilitate library partner communication, standardize projects and simplify the grant process) reinforce one another to apply each of the five aspects of collective impact. We understand that implementing one or all three of the initiatives will take time. Therefore, this graphic represents how over time the three initiatives can work to highlight one or more of the five pillars of collective impact.

Major Takeaways

Listening is Key

The collective impact ideal of continuous communication cannot be successfully reached unless all stakeholders are willing to listen and empathize with each other. The backbone organization has a responsibility to the donors as the keeper of the community chest; the library partners have a responsibility to their community members to supply the best services possible. Both are vital points of GSVUW mission because without the donors, the libraries would not be able supply those services. It is additionally important for the donors to feel that their money is accounted for and this push has put strain on the library partners because it means the library staff have to spend time justifying their programs instead of interacting with the community.

This tension can be better handled by opening the lines of communication between the library and GSVUW to understand where both sides are coming from. In many interviews, stakeholders mentioned areas where they felt either GSVUW or the libraries could improve. However, both parties always shared least one comment that recognized the hard position either GSVUW or the library partners are in. This empathy needs to be practiced more often in order to create a sense of community in which stakeholders feel comfortable to ask for help, collaborate and to try new programs. If any major stakeholder feels that they are always being critiqued, innovation will become stagnant.

Value of Empowerment

Implementing a system that empowers library partners to take action on things they want to see changed within the grant process or any other aspect of their GSVUW experience can improve GSVUW's reputation while allowing them to be a more effective backbone organization. Many conversations we had with library partners referred to their disappointment that after 20 years or so, GSVUW still asked for outcomes or 'proof' that the library programming they implement every single summer is effective. Since the grant process is uniform for all funded partners, even the ones that are in their infancy, the library partners who have been working with UW for years have felt there is not a level of trust in their relationship with GSVUW that should be there, they are unsure of what else they need to prove.

Many of our recommendations, such as intra-library communication, push the idea of trust amongst partners and even go one step further emphasizing that library partners can be a huge asset to the backbone organization. By giving the library partners power in the measurement tool final decision or asking them to weigh in on other GSVUW matters,GSVUW as the backbone organization would be showing that they recognize the many years of experience each partner has and that they want to capitalize on such knowledge. Additionally, if the library partners feel empowered to take on problems themselves or talk amongst their network, GSVUW has to answer fewer questions and only be there for things that cannot be handled by anyone else.

Standardizing is Unifying

Program standardization could help create community amongst partners and create a more efficient system for GSVUW. Through the program standardization process, the library partners are encouraged to share best practices and borrow ideas from one another. If the library partners were able to trade best practices and then go one step further by borrowing programs, it could help aid communication and help individual libraries reach more communities. Specifically, is could help develop a sense of community between the libraries, which could help with the onboarding process. Library partners would be able to share knowledge with each other about the grant process and their experience working with GSVUW. This could potentially save Stacey or other members of that committee from spending time with only one partner. Internally, GSVUW would have to do less to regulate the library partners if they were able to regulate each other with similar agendas and best practices.

GSVUW Value Added

Finally, GSVUW needs to provide more than just funding to the library partners if the organization wants to fully embrace collective impact. As an example, if a donor had $10,000 and went to a library partner saying, "I want to donate this money to your library- should I give it straight to you now or give it to you through GSVUW?". The current answer to this scenario would be the library asking for that $10,000 directly because that would require less work on their end to receive it. What GSVUW should want is the library partners to say, "no, please donate through GSVUW because they give me community, direction, and programming that I would not be able to do on my own." As a backbone organization GSVUW needs to produce value added to the library partners in more ways than just monetary so that the library partners spread the positive reputation of their backbone organization throughout communities in Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties.