

2017 Case Study

The Elements of Community Impact

United
Way



Valley of the Sun
United Way

\$46M+ INVESTED

130+ PARTNERS

1 strong COMMUNITY

Data. Collaboration. Funding.

Together, these essential elements help organizations make a greater impact on the community...one person at a time.

For many years Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW) has been a pioneer in developing effective Community Impact strategies at a local level.

They bring together the right partners and give them the tools and support necessary to address critical community needs. They've built a network of nearly 500 business partners, 90,000 donors, and 5,000 volunteers, all working toward the same shared goal – to build a thriving community.

Today the organization provides over \$46 million each year to support over 130 partner programs and services under three (3) Impact Areas: Children & Youth, Ending Hunger and Homelessness, and Increasing Financial Stability.

But *funding is just one of the elements of community impact.*

THE POWER OF DATA

Data is a powerful tool.

It helps organizations like VSUW identify critical community issues and begin to uncover the deeper reasons for – and effects of – those issues. It can also help communities recognize effective solutions and examples of success to build on.

In the beginning, partner programs identified their own outcomes and would report the actual results they achieved. The data was helpful to assess the effectiveness of each program, but it still left them *looking for a way to combine data across all programs to see how donor investments made a broader impact on the community.*

BUILDING A SHARED DATA SYSTEM

"Data is so important to attaining our goals, it helps us do a better job of helping children and their families access the services they need, therefore contributing to a thriving community overall. It is essential to our success."

- Brian F. Spicker,
Chief Program Officer,
Valley of the Sun
United Way

VSUW was ready to evolve to the next phase of community impact – shared data across programs.

Rather than relying on partners to identify their own outcomes, VSUW went through a comprehensive strategic planning process to identify Scopes of Work for each Impact Area. The scopes helped VSUW ensure that partner programs worked toward the same goals and measured the same outcomes along the way.

After aligning programs to shared measures, VSUW turned to two key technology resources, [e-CImpact](#) and [i-CResults](#), to collect and analysis the data.



e-CImpact is a comprehensive Community Impact Management System that tracks investments and overall program performance.

i-CResults is a Data Collection and Analysis Tool that captures and analyzes client results to see how results change by category (i.e. school district, race, poverty level, etc.) or over time.

THE FINAL INGREDIENT

VSUW was now ready to *add the most important ingredient of community impact – collaboration.*

The link between early literacy and long-term academic success is undeniable. Youth who read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade graduate high school at higher rates than their peers. Research has shown that this important milestone is a marker of whether a student is on track academically and can serve as a 'pulse point' for a community's education system.

Read On Arizona is a public/private collaboration of 500+ partners committed to improving language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children from birth through age eight. Read On Arizona is also associated with The Campaign for Grade Level-Reading, a national initiative working to ensure reading proficiency by the end of third grade.

"A whole new world of data collection and analysis opened up when we started using i-CResults. We could finally see what was happening in real time and drill down to a specific school district to see if results varied. We were headed in the right direction."

- Dawn Gerundo,
Director, Education and Children,
Valley of the Sun United Way



There are 23 Read On communities throughout Arizona, each with localized partnerships and formal plans to improve early literacy.

In Phoenix multiple Read On communities were established. The City of Phoenix served as the lead for Read On Phoenix and Valley of the Sun provided leadership to Read On Riverside, Read On Roosevelt, and Read On Balsz.

Since the all of the Read On communities were ultimately working toward the same goals and measuring the same results, *the City of Phoenix and Valley of*

the Sun United Way (VSUW) decided it would be more effective to unite the communities under a single Read On Phoenix umbrella.

The partners agreed to use a Collective Impact framework to guide the work, which includes five (5) key conditions:

1. Common Agenda
2. Mutually Reinforcing Activities
3. Continuous Communication
4. Shared Measurement
5. Backbone Support

"Rather than recreate the wheel, our goal was to use existing resources in new and more collaborative ways to maximize results.

VSUW already had a successful data collection and analysis system established. Building on what's working already was the perfect solution."

- Tim Valencia,
Youth and Education Manager,
City of Phoenix

Based on their successful Read On and Thriving Together Initiatives, the City of Phoenix turned to VSUW for their expertise in shared measurement and funding programs in order to leverage each other's strengths.

The move was perfectly timed.

"This is exactly what Read On Arizona hopes local communities will work toward and accomplish together – better outcomes for children and families through improved collaboration and resource sharing which can lead to greater efficiencies and stronger outcomes."

- Terri Clark,
Literacy Director,
Read On Arizona

A BRIGHT FUTURE

A unified Read On Phoenix is an expression of community impact in action.

It takes the individual ingredients of funding, shared data and collaboration and harnesses their collective power to improve outcomes for children and youth.

Partners will be able to capture and analyze key activities and milestones, like schools readiness and grade level reading, throughout the learning continuum – not only by school or neighborhood, but across the entire city.

Read On Phoenix partners will also avoid reporting the same data multiple times in multiple places. Instead, they'll be able to utilize VSUW's i-CResults System to record their results one time, saving valuable time and resources.

At the end of the day though, this effort is about the people it will impact, not the process used to get there.

VSUW and its partners are better positioned than ever before to *build a stronger learning continuum from birth to college and career, ensuring all children in Maricopa County are able to thrive together.*

"As a Read On Phoenix partner and Read On Arizona board member that voted to approve the merger, we're very excited that a shared data system is being established. Aligning expectations across the entire system saves partners time while improving available data...it's definitely a win-win!"

– Kendra Smiley,
Senior Program Manager, Literacy
Southwest Human Development



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