

# Component 4: Organizational Leadership & Governance

**Scope:** Lead your local United Way to successfully fulfill its mission, and in doing so, garner trust, legitimacy and support from the local community and the United Way system.

## Introduction

Your United Way's CEO and board of directors are ultimately accountable for your organization's performance, reputation, and stature in your community. The CEO and volunteer leaders play a critical role in the success of your United Way, your community, and the entire United Way system.

In the past, good management was sufficient for United Ways to excel as fundraising/fund allocation organizations. However, the complexity of community issues today and the ambition of United Way's aspirations require more than good management.

Harnessing the desire in communities to create real and lasting improvements in people's lives and turning that desire into collective action will require leadership in the following new ways:

- Not only planning, budgeting and allocating, but developing a compelling vision, goals, and strategies for improving lives
- Not only organizing and staffing, but aligning resources to attain your vision and goals
- Not only controlling, monitoring and problem solving, but motivating, inspiring, and enabling people to keep moving in the right direction
- Not only defining your United Way's values, but communicating, promoting and modeling core values in your business practices and individual behavior.

Governance also takes on a new level of importance. In the past, good governance for United Way meant that it had a board of directors representative of its major corporate donors and structures to provide strong fiduciary oversight of fundraising and fund allocation activities. However, driving your United Way to achieve a community impact mission calls for the board to give greater attention to setting direction for the organization, ensuring necessary resources, and engaging in issues in ways that will differentiate it as a leading voice for human welfare in the community.

Through excellence in organizational leadership and governance, your United Way will become a mission-driven organization, where staff and volunteers are passionate, focused and aligned to achieve goals. Your United Way will have credibility, add value, and be recognized as indispensable to your community's health and well-being. As staff and volunteers continuously improve and innovate, your United Way will become more resilient and able to negotiate, navigate and capitalize on opportunities. Finally, your United Way will develop a reputation for integrity, transparency and accountability and be recognized

as the premier vehicle for individuals who wish to direct their philanthropy and/or volunteerism toward improving people's lives.

Wondering where to start? Begin by paying attention to these critical areas:

- Alignment, which is a driver of progress and success in accomplishing mission, and achieving community impact and organizational goals
- Board development, especially recruiting new board members who will champion your United Way's mission, have the expertise and stamina to help accomplish it, and bring others along
- System citizenship, because the good deeds and misdeeds of any one United Way can have dramatic repercussions, helping or hindering the performance of many others.

**STANDARD 4.1: MISSION.** United Way has a clearly stated mission, approved by the board of directors, in pursuit of improving lives by strengthening local communities. All organizational activities are consistent with the mission, and all who work for, or on behalf of, United Way understand, articulate and support its stated purpose. The general public is aware of United Way's mission.

**Practices:**

**4.1(a) Common Mission Statement.** Ensure that your mission statement is consistent with the United Way system mission, in meaning if not in language.

**4.1(b) Staff and Board Commitment.** Promote staff and board understanding of the mission and their role in fulfilling it.

**4.1(c) Mission-Critical Activities.** Periodically evaluate activities in relation to mission and eliminate or restructure activities as needed.

**4.1(d) Guide for Decision-Making.** Evaluate opportunities and decisions in relation to the mission.

**4.1(e) Public Awareness.** Promote widespread public recognition of your United Way's mission through all of your activities.

**4.1(f) Periodic Review and Revisions to Mission.** Evaluate your mission every three to five years to ensure that it is responsive to and has value for your constituencies and communities served.

**STANDARD 4.2: STAFF AND VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP.** United Way's CEO and volunteer leaders provide visible, active and effective leadership for the United Way and the community. The CEO and volunteer leaders hold themselves accountable for achieving community impact and organizational goals, and fulfill the responsibilities described in the practices below.

**Practices:**

**4.2(a) Leading Mission.** Demonstrate support, commitment and participation in your United Way's community impact work.

**4.2(b) Leading through Values.** Model and champion your United Way's core values inside and outside the organization and ensure congruence between values and actions.

**4.2(c) Leading Relationships.** Establish positive relationships, positioning your United Way as a valuable partner in achieving individual and collective aspirations. Each is a knowledgeable and effective spokesperson for community issues and your United Way's strategies to address them.

**4.2(d) Leading Performance and Results.** Provide clear direction and goals for United Way and its involvement in community issues. Make sound decisions, identify appropriate actions, and develop and align necessary resources to produce results. Measure and monitor performance.

**4.2(e) Leading Organizational Change.** Develop and implement a clear change strategy for your United Way's transformation to a community impact organization, including measures to address mindset change, realistic timelines, milestones and course corrections.

**STANDARD 4.3: GOVERNANCE.** United Way's volunteer board of directors is effective in setting direction for the organization, ensuring necessary resources (i.e., human, financial, relationship) and providing oversight of programs, finances, legal compliance, and values. The board of directors' activities are guided by the practices described below.

**4.3(a) Integrity, Transparency, and Ethical Conduct.** Ensure that the organization as a whole, and individual staff, board members and volunteers, pursue all activities with integrity and in an ethical manner. To do so, promulgate a code of ethics, annual disclosure statements, training, and the designation of an ethics officer.

**4.3(b) Board Focus.** In addition to its role in fiduciary oversight, give appropriate time and attention to strategic activities. Focus time and attention on:

- Raising and resolving strategic issues
- Learning about, understanding and representing a community perspective
- Pursuing opportunities to collaborate with other organizations, including other local United Ways.

**4.3(c) Board Member Engagement.** Create expectations that individual board members advocate within their spheres of influence for the commitment, resources and involvement needed to achieve specific results.

“Champions, not chairs”: United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta reshaped the roles and expectations of board members to be champions and set direction for the work of community impact. While the size of the board has been reduced by half to 30 members, it has attracted more diverse leadership with the skills, experiences and the desire to get deeply involved in strategic thinking and problem solving.

**4.3(d) Board Process.** Design effective, action-oriented board communications, meetings, and other processes.

**4.3(e) Board Structures.** Ensure that board size, structure and selection of officers promote shared responsibilities and joint commitment.

**4.3(f) Board/Staff Collaborations.** Support flexible and pragmatic working relationships between board and staff members in order to achieve organizational and community goals. Leverage board members’ expertise and connections. Hold staff leaders accountable for managing relationships with individual board members.

**4.3(g) Board Development.** Recruit board members who are representative of your community’s diversity and whose background and expertise advance your United Way’s ability to fulfill its mission. Implement an effective program for orientation, education, communication, advancement, and recognition of United Way board members. Conduct a periodic assessment of board effectiveness, at both group and individual levels.

**4.3(h) Board Oversight of Executive Performance.** Annually assess your CEO’s performance and approve appropriate rewards that are compliant with IRS intermediate sanctions rules.

**STANDARD 4.4: STRATEGIC AND BUSINESS PLANNING.** United Way establishes short and long-term goals and identifies strategies to accomplish them. Strategies are based on data and analysis, address United Way’s selected priority issues, and drive resource development, marketing, financial and operational plans (collectively, a “business plan”), as well as staff work plans and accountability. United Way assesses progress annually and makes changes as needed.

**Practices:**

**4.4(a) Decisions.** As the deliverable from strategic planning, make a set of integrated choices regarding a limited number of community issues your United Way will address, donor/investor segments that it will target, and resources and operational capabilities (including partnerships) needed.

- 4.4(b) Data and Analysis.** Integrate information and analysis of community needs, market trends, customer requirements and competitive environment in order to determine goals and strategies.
- 4.4(c) Alternative Business Combinations.** Evaluate whether alternative business combinations with neighboring United Ways would more effectively achieve goals at lower cost.
- 4.4(d) Participation.** Invite staff, volunteers, donors/investors, community partners, and others to provide information or input, conduct analysis, or help make decisions in order to ensure sufficient organizational and community buy-in.
- 4.4(e) Monitoring and Assessment.** Each year, identify, review and update benchmarks and indicators of progress.

**STANDARD 4.5: ALIGNMENT.** Leaders align all organizational elements and resources (functional areas, systems, skills, staff, board, volunteers, structure, culture, mindset and investments) to support United Way’s mission and community impact and organizational goals. United Way measures group and individual performance against these goals. Adjustments are made as needed.

**Practices:**

- 4.5(a) Identifying Desired Capabilities and Resources.** Identify how your organizational elements and resources will support your United Way’s work.
- 4.5(b) Staff and Volunteer Roles.** Communicate how staff, board and other volunteer efforts contribute to your United Way’s work.
- 4.5(c) Workplans and Accountability.** Ensure that all departmental and individual work plans are congruent with, and establish accountability for, community impact and organizational goals. Measure individual and group performance against these goals.
- 4.5(d) Identifying and Developing Required Competencies.** Recruit and develop other leaders, staff and volunteers who offer the required balance of skills, behaviors and values needed to advance your United Way’s mission.
- 4.5(e) Critical Responsibilities.** Assign staff, board members and volunteers shared responsibility for mobilizing diverse resources, creating the brand experience and achieving community impact goals.
- 4.5(f) Volunteer Management.** Implement a formal program for recruitment, orientation, advancement, communication, recognition and evaluation of volunteers. Leverage board members’ expertise and connections. Assign staff responsibility for managing relationships with individual volunteers.

**4.5(g) Recognizing and Eliminating Barriers.** Identify and remove barriers, including human, cultural and mindset barriers that impede organizational alignment.

**STANDARD 4.6: ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT.**

United Way continuously improves performance by: 1) anticipating and reacting to change, complexity and uncertainty, 2) cultivating a culture committed to the innovation of products and services, and 3) facilitating the development, growth and succession of talent.

United Way leaders create the optimal culture, processes and infrastructure for continuous learning at organizational and individual levels. United Way staff, volunteers, and partners translate new learning into action that achieves results.

**Practices:**

**4.6(a) Teaching and Learning Culture.** Build an organizational culture that invites both formal and informal teaching and learning, as well as integration of new thinking and behaviors.

**4.6(b) Continuous Improvement.** Continually evaluate the effectiveness of organizational activities, implement lessons learned, and use market and customer feedback to improve future actions. Identify effective approaches to community mobilization and social change. Adopt and exchange promising practices within your United Way and among community partners, other United Ways and other institutions.

**4.6(c) Measurement and Rewards.** Measure the impact of learning on both individual and organizational performance. Encourage and reward initiatives that experiment with new ideas or the adoption of new practices.

**4.6(d) Learning Strategy.** Create an organizational learning strategy linked to your business strategy, allocate specific investment of financial and human resources to implementation, and develop relationships with others who have relevant knowledge, programs, technology, and other resources.

**4.6(e) Professional Development and Leadership Development.** Design a professional development program for staff, board members and other volunteers that includes training, tools and opportunities for teamwork, rotations and/or exchanges. Ensure that staff, board and volunteer leaders pursue their own personal development in order to acquire or strengthen skills, mindset and behaviors to successfully lead your community.

**4.6(f) Cultivating Talent.** Recruit and develop a diversified talent pool based on the mix of competencies needed to achieve your United Way's goals. Regularly assess individuals, providing appropriate development opportunities. Plan for and facilitate staff succession into critical roles.

**STANDARD 4.7: INCLUSIVENESS.** United Way recognizes that in order to effectively engage communities to achieve community impact goals, staff, volunteers, donors/investors, and community partners should include the communities United Way serves. The organization’s culture, recruitment, partnerships, and other business practices demonstrate inclusiveness. Formal policies and practices promote and measure inclusiveness in all aspects of internal and external functions.

**Practices:**

**4.7(a) Awareness.** Develop and disseminate your United Way’s inclusiveness principles and values. Include clear language affirming your commitment to and respect for diversity and inclusiveness in your vision statement, bylaws and strategic plan.

**4.7(b) Inclusive Culture.** Demonstrate commitment to and accountability for an inclusive environment in which differences are recognized, respected, valued, and even celebrated.

**4.7(c) Accountability.** Develop and maintain a plan for achieving and promoting inclusiveness which is reviewed every two years by your board.

**4.7(d) Outreach.** Implement an outreach strategy with measurable goals and objectives.

**4.7(e) Business and Community Relationships.** Conduct business with those of diverse backgrounds.

**4.7(f) Ongoing Learning.** Identify and address specific inclusiveness issues, barriers, and/or opportunities. Build awareness into staff, board and volunteer training and development programs.

**STANDARD 4.8: SYSTEM CITIZENSHIP.** Your United Way’s relationships with other United Ways, state associations and UWA acknowledge that each member bears responsibilities toward the others. The successes and failures of any one member impact the entire system. Your United Way fosters a high level of trust, information exchange and mutual help with others in the system to further our community impact mission, create a consistent brand experience, and support a strong network of United Ways locally, regionally and nationally.

**Practices:**

**4.8(a) Mission Statement.** Adopt a mission statement that is consistent with the United Way system mission, in meaning if not in language.

**4.8(b) Membership Requirements.** Honor both the spirit and letter of UWA’s membership requirements.

**4.8(c) Respect for United Way Service Areas.** Honor the sovereignty of United Way service areas by:

- Never soliciting companies in another United Way’s territory (assigned by zip codes in Gift Link) without their written concurrence, as outlined in the Trademark Licensing agreement
- Processing designations according to Requirement M regarding timeliness, pricing and reporting
- Following the campaign reporting requirements established by the National Professional Council (NPC) for all shared accounts.

**4.8(d) Issues and Concerns with Respect to Other United Ways.**

Communicate questions and concerns directly to other United Ways.

**4.8(e) Conflicts of Interest.** When a conflict arises between local United Ways, your United Way advocates for what is in the best interest of the donor/investor and then the United Way system.

**4.8(f) Promoting Accountability.** If your United Way is unable to resolve concerns about the legitimacy, ethics or accountability of another local United Way, voice concerns to UWA.

**4.8(g) Information Sharing on Major Givers.** Proactively share information with other United Ways and UWA on donors/investors to facilitate retention and cultivation of major givers.

When one of your United Way’s major donors/investors or key volunteers moves, do you put her in touch with the United Way in her new community? Imagine the potential to retain support and leadership for United Way--and communities--if this were common practice!

**4.8(h) Collaboration with Other Local United Ways on Common Issues.** Create opportunities for regional or statewide collaboration and resource-sharing on issues and initiatives that are relevant to multiple United Ways, including public policy and advocacy.

**4.8(i) Leveraging Partnerships with Other Local United Ways.** Establish regional or statewide partnerships and collaborations, when appropriate, for:

- Unified message strategy
- Media relations
- Regional campaigns
- Staff and volunteer training
- Shared services, including purchasing, pledge processing and administrative back office operations
- Community assessments and data gathering

- Public opinion polling.

**4.8(j) Corporate Relationships.** In shared territories, consult and work with other United Ways when asking for corporate gifts and involvement (e.g., loaned executives, volunteers, support for issues).

**4.8(k) National Impact.** When compatible with identified local issues, implement initiatives that further United Way's national impact agenda (e.g., early childhood development initiative and 2-1-1).

