

Below are the answers to FAQs about MUW’s new direction, strategic plan, investment process and more.

**Q: How did the strategic plan journey begin?**

A: In 2012 MUW, The NH Charitable Foundation and NH Center for Public Policy Studies conducted extensive research and published a report called Community Well-Being in the Monadnock Region. A steering committee with broad community representation participated in this process. The report uncovered 15 challenges facing our region -- from healthcare, to education, to safety and security and more. Of those, three focus areas rose to the top because of their significance and MUW’s ability to convene the community in addressing them. They are: Children, Education and Financial Stability. This data was reviewed by the NH Center for Public Policy again in 2016 – the data hasn’t changed.

**Q: Are you facing any challenges?**

A: MUW is facing challenges in fundraising that must be addressed in order to support our community, as we have for the past 65 years. United Way campaigns across the country are in a slow, steady decline. Although this region is known for its generosity, MUW is also experiencing a decline. Over the past 7-9 years, we have met goal only once. It is also more difficult to find and engage volunteers, and our donor turnover rate is increasing.

**Q: What other research was conducted before you embarked on your strategic plan?**

A: Through the strategic planning process, MUW conducted research with the UNH Research Center and found that MUW is viewed as having a strong and trusted relationship with the community. In addition, our community wants to: invest in education, financial stability and children; support basic needs such as food, shelter, heat and transportation; and increase our focus on long-term strategies. This is why MUW is changing.

**Q: What does your new strategic plan include?**

A: It includes investing in programs that address children, education, financial stability and basic needs; championing diverse collaborations; encouraging innovative practices; funding high-impact and research-based initiatives; advocating for those in need; mobilizing people to get involved; and communicating openly.

**Q: What changes happened as a result of the strategic plan?**

A: MUW is changing the way it does business. These changes include: a change from investing in agencies to investing in issues, like stabilizing families, reducing risky behaviors and creating a job-ready workforce.

**Q: What is your timeframe to complete the change?**

A: In 2016, we created our Strategic Plan with our community. In 2017, we shared this plan, gathered input from the community, set “Bold Goals” and piloted our first direct investment. From 2018 to 2021 we will phase-in our new investment strategy, while providing support for all partners during this process. In 2021 and beyond, we will see greater impact for better lives!

**Q: How will the Impact model make it easier for agencies to stay focused on their mission and do their work?**

A: MUW’s impact investment funding model encourages a collective approach between agencies to addressing our region’s most pressing needs. Impact helps agencies achieve their missions through a high-level of collaboration.

**Q: Are funds more competitive? I don’t like competing against others who are doing similar work.**

A: If you offer a similar program to another agency, consider forming a collective. Collectives often focus on decreased duplication of service, improved quality and increased geographic reach, to name a few. Further, collectives create opportunities to communicate a shared mission and to reach more people with the message.

**Q: Isn’t this just a way for MUW to say they are doing more with less money?**

A: Impact work helps MUW access more money and leverage new funds in the community. By increasing collaboration among agencies and aligning with shared measures, MUW can use the data to apply for larger grants outside the community and apply it locally. This is the multiplier effect. By investing in multi-year grant cycles, MUW is positioning partner initiatives to more effectively address issues and show measurable success.

**Q: If you are accessing new funding, why do you still need to run a local campaign? Could we run our own local campaign?**

A: The workplace campaign will remain MUW’s largest source of funds raised for our community. Campaigns will engage our community around our shared impact areas and the people whose lives are improved as a result. The campaign helps us access and leverage the new funding (state, federal, foundational, etc.).

**Q: I have a program that addresses a serious problem in our community. Normally, I could have gotten funding. What should I do now?**

A: Another benefit of impact investing is access to experts. If the problem you are addressing is related to one of our focus areas - children, education or financial stability - we can help align you with others in the region who are addressing this need. We can also explore how your program can be part of a collective approach toward addressing the community issue.

**Q: Our financial reports and budgets are approved each year by our board. How do I adjust for RFP-based, multi-year funding?**

A: Multi-year funding can improve program stability. You’ll be able to think strategically about your program without the need to apply for MUW funds each year and wait for the allocation process. MUW is available to help agencies adjust to this new funding model.

**Q: Will MUW be able to speak up for my mission?**

A: Yes. One of MUW’s most strategic new activities is advocacy at the local, state, and federal level for policy changes that will impact our community. Our shared goals and compiled community data gives us leverage on issues that directly impact our community.

**Q: There is a grant that is directly related to our mission and our work. Should I apply on my own?**

A: By demonstrating impact at the community level in alignment with MUW, you could be better positioned for the grant as part of a group or as an individual recipient. We encourage you to connect with your collective partners and MUW to determine the best strategy for accessing these funds. Together, we can determine if an individual, collective or MUW-sponsored grant will be the most advantageous avenue to bring funds into your program and the community. Many grants require standardized measurement reporting and expert evaluators. MUW now serves as the centralized data collection resource and offers expert evaluation services. Agencies are encouraged to use MUW’s centralized data collection services for grants.

**Q: Will MUW continue telling the stories of agencies in the community?**

A: Yes. MUW promotes the work of its partners. Communicating shared goals and strategies is a “win-win,” as it raises awareness about both the powerful work of local agencies and MUW’s efforts to bring agencies together to improve community well-being.

**Q: Are the goals and metrics for each focus area going to be broad, or very specific? Will the outcomes that MUW is looking for be short-term or long-term? Will measurements be shared?**

A: The goals and outcomes are broad and long-term. MUW is looking to support community-level change, which takes time. Collecting performance measures and indicators will help track short-term progress toward long-term goals. Shared measurements will be important to keep programs aligned with common goals.

**Q: A few years ago, MUW had discussed sourcing more funding through grants. When MUW sees a grant opportunity, what will MUW’s process be for involving agencies in grant opportunities?**

A: Depending on the grant, MUW will consider the best way to involve its partners and other agencies. MUW will be intentional about engaging service providers regarding grant opportunities that apply to their work. Equitable engagement of partners is at the heart of the Collective Impact approach.

**Q: How does the RFP look different from the funding applications that MUW has used in the past?**

A: Through the RFP process, MUW asks for proposals that address a particular issue/focus area and offer particular outcomes. Funding from the RFP process would be for 2-3 years, rather than 1 year. Reporting would still take place semi-annually.

**Q: Do I have to apply as a collective only? And will there be a certain dollar amount assigned to each RFP?**

A: You can come in as an individual agency OR you can come in as a collective. Under the Children’s RFP, collectives of three or more programs can apply for up to $150,000 per year. Individual program applications can apply for up to $30,000 per year. These amounts are subject to change in future years as MUW’s Investment Process evolves.

**Q: If the lead agency of a collective fails to report or goes out of business what happens to the other partners? What do you do if the leading applicant’s program is eliminated? Smaller agencies are concerned with being lost within a larger collective.**

A: Each collective will have a memorandum of agreement within the group and with MUW. Should an issue arise, we will work with the collective group to help resolve it.

**Q: How do we determine where our program aligns?**

Look at the outcomes and strategies in all three MUW focus areas and see where you fit. MUW can help agencies connect with each other and initiate conversation between programs. We will also provide feedback on where you might align.

**Q: What is happening with Basic Needs?**

A: Basic needs such as food, housing, fuel and transportation are foundational to achieving success in the three focus areas. The strategies outlined in each focus area include Basic Needs, and we ask programs providing Basic Needs services to identify which focus area they most closely align with.