



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 is the same.

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

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: Does MUW have a sense of how many of the agencies it’s currently funding will become ineligible for funding as it adopts new priority areas?**

A: This question will be answered as the priority areas are defined. MUW encourages its partners to consider how their programs might be framed differently to fit within the newly-defined focus areas, adjust how programs operate, and/or think creatively about how they could collaborate with other agencies/programs to fit funding criteria.

**Q: If a program no longer fits MUW’s funding criteria, when will it be notified?**

A: Programs can begin working with MUW now to figure out whether/how its work aligns with MUW focus areas. If a program is unable to align with the focus area, MUW and the program can explore options for training and brainstorm alternate funding sources. MUW is also open to collaborating in unique ways with partners who may not align with funding criteria.

**Q: Will there be a funding gap between the end of the traditional allocations process and the start of RFPs?**

A: MUW’s transition process ensures that partners receive a minimum of 6 months notice of awards for RFP and traditional allocations.

**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 do agencies handle their strategic planning if MUW funding is an important part of their programs and its sustainability is uncertain?**

A: MUW will involve partners in every part of its transition process and want to ensure that agencies have ample time to prepare. Agencies will know at least 6 months in advance whether their programs and collectives are funded. Any partners who don’t “fit” with MUW’s new approach can apply for transitional funding. MUW leadership is happy to come to agency staff/board to present and discuss its strategic plan.

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

A: Through the RFP process, MUW will be asking 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. MUW is especially seeking agencies to work together and submit collective proposals. 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.

**Q: How many RFPs will MUW accept for a particular focus area?**

A: MUW cannot provide an answer at this time. It's too early in the transition process to understand exactly what is possible. Collaborative proposals are often very attractive to big funders/donors, which could mean that additional resources could be available to support a number of proposals.

**Q: Will the RFPs be user friendly?**

A: The RFP process is designed in three tiers. A letter of intent due in December, a Concept Paper due in January and a full application due in March.

**Q: If the lead agency 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 strategies in all three areas and see here 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. For 2019, MUW has asked all Basic Need providers to apply for transitional funding. MUW will work with Basic Need providers over the next two years to determine the most effective approach to bringing Basic Needs into the collectives.

**Q: How is MUW communicating this change?**

A: MUW is reaching out to stakeholders- partnering agencies, donors, volunteers, corporate partners - at all levels and will continue to do so throughout the transition period. Here are a few examples of our communication process:

- Regular partner meetings with MUW president, staff and board. January 2017 – present
- MUW president and board members – actively meeting with partner boards, October 2017 – present
- Meetings and presentations to all campaign cabinet volunteers – July – Sept 2017
- One-on-one meetings and targeted outreach with donors – September 2017 - present
- Targeted outreach to corporate partners – September 2017 – present