

Needs Assessment for Non-Profit



Project: Sheboygan Area United Way Needs Assessment Study

Purpose: The intent of the needs assessment research was to gather as much information from a broad array of possible perspectives in the Sheboygan area as possible. In addition to identifying areas to address through programs and partner organizations, the United Way wanted to increase donations.

Result: The needs identified and prioritized in the study were used to set the framework for funding allocations for the Sheboygan Area United Way. The allocations committee of the United Way directed funding toward programs that addressed the highest priority needs identified in the survey. They developed a system of outcome measurement with semiannual reporting. All future funding will be based on the needs assessment and the outcome measurement reporting. In the following campaign, donations increased approximately 20% over the previous year.

Summary of Research Stages

- APR under the direction of Dr. Peltier completed this needs assessment study for the Sheboygan Area United Way.
- **Advisory Committee:** The Needs Assessment Committee spent substantial time identifying vital stakeholder groups for inclusion in the process. Stakeholders were classified into three general segments: contributors, providers, and clients. In addition to identifying groups to include in the remainder of the research, the Advisory Committee helped identify key issues to address and approved all guides and the questionnaire.
- **Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups:** Interviews and focus groups were completed with multiple publics including: educators, clergy, United Way agencies and non-agencies, health care professionals, minorities, social service personnel, government/law enforcement personnel, area businesses and residents. The findings from these two qualitative stages helped formulate response categories for the questionnaire and narrow down findings.
- **Questionnaire:** Data was collected from a large-scale sample consisting of the aforementioned key publics. Surveys were distributed by mail and door-to-door in a random sample of Sheboygan neighborhoods.
- **Communication:** It was essential that the stakeholder groups understood that the United Way was interested in their perspectives and needs, would be listening to their concerns, would be involving them in the process and further efforts, and the United Way would act upon the data once it was collected. Thus, the effect of the community needs assessment process was to improve public relations with the community and provide a positive image of the United Way as an effective and responsive organization. The results were communicated to all key publics including the local media. Meetings were also held that conveyed the findings to key constituency groups.
- Based on the research findings, the United Way allocated funds to the areas identified as the highest priority needs by the general public and constituency groups. An assessment and reporting system was developed to ensure funding allocations matched priority needs.
- The following campaign for donations resulted in an approximate 20% increase over the previous year's donations to the United Way.
- This research study was cited as best-practice in *Quality Progress* magazine, a journal of the American Society for Quality, August 2005.