

## Theory of Change

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### *Social Services*

We believe individuals and families are more likely to build a more secure future if they have access to comprehensive supports and services.

*Rationale:* Up to 41 percent of households in some parts of the region have incomes of less than \$25,000 per year versus the national average of 22 percent<sup>1</sup>. This means that families in the region experience rates of poverty that are above the national average. Living in a low-income household can adversely affect an individual's productivity and ability to learn. Poverty is significantly correlated with poor nutrition and health, unsafe housing, dangerous neighborhoods and food insecurity<sup>2</sup>. Persistent high rates of poverty in the region are accompanied by a huge demand for social services. This increased demand for services cut across all the human services sectors (health, education, substance abuse, homelessness, transportation, housing, basic need, etc.) and is occurring at the time federal and state spending for these sectors is decreasing<sup>3</sup>. Service providers must use available resources in the most effective way possible in order to stabilize individuals and families in crisis and move them to self-sufficiency. Social services that use comprehensive approaches (approaches that look at client environments rather than only the individuals as way to address and understand problems, promote a concern with the relationship between problems rather than with single problems and support greater focus on family and individual voice and choice) have been shown to effectively stabilize families in crisis and help them to regain control over their lives. These approaches should work hand in hand with ongoing initiatives in the region committed to assisting vulnerable populations in reaching self-sufficiency through career development<sup>4</sup>. Available resources to implement these workforce initiatives present an opportunity to utilize IMPACT funding and engage with intermediaries to encourage greater coordination, cooperation and collaboration among social service providers.

#### *A. ULTIMATE GOAL*

To help low-income individuals and families move toward self-sufficiency.

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<sup>1</sup> National Census Bureau American Community Survey

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/labor/supports-for-working-families.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Safety Net: Financial Stability for Hardworking People & Those in Crisis: Vision Council Recommendations Data Compilation and Analysis, Best Practice Research Approved June, 28, 2011, United Way of Greater New Orleans

<sup>4</sup> Greater New Orleans Foundation, United Way, Goodwill Industries, City of New Orleans

## B. OBJECTIVES

- By 2016 10 percent of individuals and families in crisis and seeking self-sufficiency will have access to comprehensive social services - approaches that look at client environments rather than only the individuals as way to address and understand problems, promote a concern with the relationship between problems rather than with single problems and support greater focus on family and individual voice and choice.
- Improve coordination among providers of social services by 2016 with at least two agencies each from the different social service sectors (health, housing, homelessness, legal aid, childcare, workforce, basic needs, substance abuse etc.) demonstrating shared involvement through documented cross-trainings, meetings, working committees, task forces etc .

*Rationale:* Low-income individuals and families seeking self-sufficiency, have needs which fall beyond the limits of a single social service model. Families with complex needs often have to navigate through multiple and sometimes competing case management plans, diminishing their chances of success. Regardless of the point of entry (homelessness, substance abuse, mental health issues, etc.), multiple supports and well-coordinated and integrated services that take into account community environment and client voice are needed for them to become self-sufficient. In the absence of data which show the percentage of low-income families engaged with comprehensive social service approaches, we think that 10 percent is a reasonable goal.

## C. WHAT WE FUND

To most effectively meet this objective , the Greater New Orleans Foundation will, through its IMPACT program, support organizations that:

1. Serve the needs of low-income individuals and families through direct assistance and a full continuum of services such crisis management and treatment, early intervention, prevention and information exchange and are guided by principle that include family voice and choice, persistence, teamed, strengths, community and outcome based.

*Rationale:* Initiatives working to help low-income families and individuals in crisis regain control over their lives and achieve self-sufficiency require a full range of support services to succeed<sup>5</sup>. There is general agreement in the human services community that a strength-based highly individualized planning process aimed at helping clients put together a team in order meet their complex need, consistently achieve important outcomes for clients – in and out of the formal human services system.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Safety Net: Financial Stability for Hardworking People & Those in Crisis: Vision Council Recommendations Data Compilation and Analysis, Best Practice Research Approved June, 28, 2011, United Way of Greater New Orleans

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.emich.edu/coe/wraparound/about.html>

2. Function as intermediaries and work to improve communication, coordination and collaboration within and between social services providers.

*Rationale:* Intermediaries can help social service agencies improve communication, coordination and collaboration. They are best positioned to: bring together different human services sectors/systems; bridge cross-system training and education gaps; convene stakeholders; collect, analyze and disseminate data; provide a framework and blueprint for systems integration; and provide technical assistance and training<sup>7 8</sup>. Increase communication, coordination and integration among social services providers, improves a family's chances of success, because it reduces the chances of clients having to follow multiple service plans, which can be discouraging and lead to failure.

#### *D. OTHER WORK WE DO IN SUPPORT OF THESE GOALS/OBJECTIVES*

New Orleans Works (NOW) is a workforce development effort that is housed at the Foundation. It is a public-private collaborative that is funded by a grant from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions and matching funds from local partners including the BioDistrict, the City of New Orleans, the Greater New Orleans Foundation, Baptist Community Ministries, Urban Strategies, and the Ford, Kellogg, JP Morgan Chase, and Surdna Foundations. In addition, the Foundation's Metropolitan Opportunities Initiative is working to increase transportation options for underserved families, helping to connect them to employment possibilities. These are complementary initiatives that by their combination of resources and efforts will yield great results in restoring families to self-sufficiency in the region.

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<sup>7</sup> Child, Adolescent , and Family Issues: Team-Based Planning and the Wraparound Process, John VanDenberg, Ph.D., Trina Osher, Ira Lourie, M.D.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.metisnet.net/papers/Rethinking-Role-of-Intermediaries.pdf>