

Executive Summary

History: As part of a strategic planning process, in February of 2006, United Way of Santa Barbara County convened three expert forums to discuss the most important issues in the health and human service areas of Children, Families, and Seniors. The purpose of these forums was to solicit input from non-profit, community, governmental, funding and educational experts on the current state of services and the desired aspirations and outcomes for each area. Through the discussions of these experts, United Way became aware of our community's need and preparedness to adopt a consensus-based Master Action Plan (MAP) for each of the three areas. After subsequent discussions with our Board of Directors, local health and human service leaders, local funders, and a variety of community leaders and stakeholders, United Way is launching the *Power of Partnership Initiative* to develop these community Master Action Plans.

Need: In the region spanning from Goleta to Carpinteria, there are currently no comprehensive, community-wide strategic plans for Children, Families, or Seniors that have general acceptance and adherence from a majority of different stakeholders. While in the last thirty years our community has seen a tremendous proliferation of services to local people in need, we have not during this time adopted a strategy to help integrate our efforts and align our resources towards agreed-upon goals. The situation is analogous to a large organization (the community) providing no common vision, goals, measurable objectives, or strategies to its various divisions or departments (service providers, funders, families etc.) and still expecting successful results. Further aggravating this situation is the fact that area experts predict escalating numbers of people needing services, reduced resources, greater competition among providers, and critical program failures within the next ten years. Currently, no one – including the experts – is quite sure how we will adapt to meet these growing needs.

Initiative Description: In Phase One of the Initiative, United Way began contacting area experts, stakeholders, community leaders, and funders to develop the structure of our planning process and the support to begin the active phase of the initiative – Phase Two. The goal of Phase Two of the Initiative will be to finish an initial version of each MAP, ultimately consisting of a Vision Statement, Benchmarks, prioritized Goals, measurable Objectives, and Strategies to achieve those objectives. The MAPs will be based on ten year aspirational goals with periodic measurement markers. We will be convening a Vision Council, Steering Committees, Expert Forums, and Community Forums— individuals from every sector of our community—to develop these consensus-driven MAPs. After the MAPs are finished, they will be disseminated to stakeholders and the community at large. Phase Two will take place between April 2008 - May 2009. Phase Three of the Initiative will be an ongoing process of implementing the plan, developing greater involvement from local stakeholders, convening ongoing service provider and funder forums, gathering data regarding services focused on the goals, measuring progress, updating the MAP, and communicating results to the community.

Benefits: The *Power of Partnership Initiative* will generate a community-driven and expert-assisted, consensus-based prioritization of the community's hopes for Children, Families, and Seniors. This shared vision, along with the Master Action Plans, will strengthen our community's efforts to increase the effectiveness of current and future attempts to improve people's lives and the underlying conditions giving rise to our health and human service challenges. Through developing common goals, strategies, measurements, and a shared language for our endeavors, our community will achieve a greater integration of service efforts and enhance our ability to increase the overall well-being of our children, families, and seniors. The benefits will include: greater efficiency and effectiveness in achieving meaningful objectives, reduced service duplication, improved collaboration and partnering among service providers, increased cooperative interactions between local funders, and increased communication between all the stakeholders. In short, the initiative will produce what we all want—more meaningful results and a stronger community.