
2Gen TOOLBOX

COMMUNITY MODELS: THE UNITED WAY

As hundreds of organizations and dozens of states around the country explore two-generation (2Gen) approaches, Ascend at the Aspen Institute, the national 2Gen hub, is documenting and sharing the lessons of field leaders. This brief from our 2Gen Toolbox focuses on a leading community model, the United Way. Below you will find snapshots of how United Ways are leveraging their community leadership roles and funding portfolios to achieve better outcomes for children and families through a 2Gen approach. Included are illustrative examples, links to case studies and other resources, and practical steps you can take to test out the approach in your work.

The United Ways highlighted below are among the more than 200 organizations that have joined Ascend's national learning and action network of organizations adopting 2Gen approaches. 2Gen approaches meet the needs of and provide opportunities for children and the adults in their lives together. Learn more about the work of leading United Ways below.

2GEN GIVING: A growing number of United Ways have adopted 2Gen approaches in their giving portfolios. In doing so, they have included 2Gen language into their requests for proposals for their partner organizations. Some have also added incentives for collaboration between organizations, and many have provided training opportunities and built learning circles for their partners to expand their understanding of 2Gen approaches.

“By making 2Gen/family needs a proactive and upfront conversation with employers, we have moved the topic from a ‘personal issue’ that the employee has to manage alone to a competitive advantage opportunity that savvy employers are leveraging. When employers change their thinking to strategies they can use to be competitive in the talent marketplace as well as their base business marketplace, everyone wins.”

– Janice Urbanik, United Way of Greater Cincinnati

In the Spotlight:

- The **United Way of Greater Cincinnati** used human-centered design to create a 2Gen model that helps parents train for and access high demand careers through its Partners for a Competitive Workforce. Through the W.K. Kellogg-funded STEPs program, they are also building formal partnerships between workforce and early care stakeholders serving children ages 0 to 8. Those were the first two steps on the United Way's path to transform its investment strategy. Eighty percent of their investments in programs and initiatives is now focused on family-centered/2Gen work.
- The **United Way of the Greater Triangle** has built incentives into recent grant opportunities that encourage organizational partnerships to serve families

holistically. They are also building their partners' understanding of 2Gen approaches to increase impact.

- To ensure their SparkPoint Centers are responding to the whole family, the **United Way of the Bay Area** includes 2Gen questions in the funding applications submitted by the lead agencies, such as “How will you utilize partnerships to ensure a whole-family approach to service delivery?”

INTEGRATED DATA: Many United Ways have also invested in integrated data systems and other outcomes tracking efforts to assess progress and identify gaps.

In the Spotlight:

- The **United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County** developed an integrated data system for the local Promise Neighborhood, which serves 6,000 young people. The United Way is currently able to share summary data to improve the delivery of in-school and out-of-school programs. Their goal is to expand the system to serve organizations and policymakers throughout the city.
- A collaboration with Ascend Fellow Dr. Chris King resulted in a [policy research project](#) to help orient the **United Way for Greater Austin's** community investments in 2Gen approaches by:
 - ▲ Leveraging 2-1-1 call data to [map out anecdotal and data-based local landscapes of 2Gen needs](#) compared to available asset (and juxtaposed with census) data
 - ▲ Producing a localized adaptation of the so-called “Robin Hood Metrics” as a tool to help assess potential economic return on local 2Gen interventions.

2GEN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP:

United Ways have also leveraged their community leadership roles to build awareness and support for 2Gen approaches. Community leadership has included hosting community learning sessions or larger

TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- [Case Study: New Approaches to Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Development \(United Way of Greater Cincinnati\)](#)
- [A Two-Generation Vision for Austin](#)
- [211 2Gen Data Visualization \(United Way of Greater Austin\)](#)
- [Using Integrated Data Systems to Strengthen Collective Impact in Out-of-School Programs \(United Way of San Antonio And Bexar County\)](#)
- [SparkPoint's 10 Key Findings: Demonstrating Progress Toward Financial Prosperity \(United Way of the Bay Area\)](#)
- [Making Tomorrow Better Together: Report from the Two-Generation Outcomes Working Group \(Ascend\)](#)

“For those of us who are past the “a-ha” moment, the formula is clear: when school-ready children grow up in income-stable households, poverty cycles are broken. As this notion became increasingly resonant among our provider partners, the 2-Gen approach became an obvious framework for service delivery in Austin – with a focus on putting that strategy into practice while always looking to add value through quality improvements and comprehensive support services.”

– Amit Motwani, United Way for Greater Austin

day-long “two-generation institutes”.

In the Spotlight:

- The **United Way for Greater Austin** developed a 2Gen Vision for Austin, which they invited community leaders, institutions, and partners to sign. They also hosted a series of community conversations with service providers that have blossomed into a full-fledged 2Gen Provider Network of more than 30 organizations.
- To further regional 2Gen efforts, the **United Way of the Bay Area** partnered with Community Schools for a regional 2Gen Institute that brought in public, private, and nonprofit community leaders to learn more about the approach and its potential for local communities.

“We had to re-think our messaging to parents when we brought SparkPoint to Community Schools. Messaging that said “Get a job. Improve your credit. Build your career. Improve your finances” led to waiting lists at other SparkPoint Centers, SparkPoints at Community Schools struggled to get parents to come. We knew this was a need, but parents weren’t coming.

We learned that parents come to school for their children, not for themselves, so we changed the messaging. SparkPoint at Community Schools now use messaging that says “Send your child to college. Learn how to best support your child’s academic success.” Parents started attending workshops. They quickly learned that part of supporting their children academically, especially conversations about college, had to involve a discussion about their own finances. That’s when SparkPoint became relevant to them.”

– Ena Yasuhara Li, United Way of the Bay Area

Interested in a 2Gen approach for your work? Here are 3 ways to begin:

- Organize a listening tour with your partners and other community stakeholders to identify whole-family opportunities and needs. Where are there opportunities to collaborate?
- Review your funding strategy and assess opportunities for alignment to serve families more holistically. The examples above provide good models to consider.
- Host a two-generation institute or community education session to engage partners.

ABOUT THE ASPEN INSTITUTE ASCEND NETWORK: The Ascend Network is comprised of more than 200 organizations in 41 states and the District of Columbia working to create a portfolio of 2Gen solutions through best and next practices; innovative policies; evidence and research; and bipartisan political will. **United Ways** are key partners in the Ascend Network, currently making up five percent of Network partners. Ascend hosts a quarterly learning call with Network United Ways on issues of their choosing.

If you are innovating on behalf of children and parents and want to strengthen your 2Gen approach, you can **apply to join the Ascend Network**: Contact: sarah.haight@aspeninstitute.org for more information.