



CLEAR IMPACT
reach your peak

A GUIDE FOR UNITED WAY LEADERS

Stronger Together

How United Ways can use Clear Impact and Results-Based Accountability to turn data into lasting community change.



Shared Measurement • Transparent Reporting • Partner Capacity • Collective Impact

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Written for United Way leaders who want to strengthen community impact by pairing the Results-Based Accountability framework with software that collects data, manages performance, supports partner reporting, and communicates progress with credibility.

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Better data for better communities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Data infrastructure is mission infrastructure

United Ways are uniquely positioned to lead community change because they combine fundraising, grantmaking, convening, advocacy, and public trust. That role becomes far more effective when a local United Way can help its partners move from isolated program reports to shared measurement, from compliance submissions to genuine learning, and from activity counts to credible evidence that people and communities are better off.

Clear Impact software and services support this shift by combining the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework with practical tools for data collection, performance management, visualization, and partner reporting. **Scorecard** helps United Ways organize population results, community indicators, program performance measures, strategy narratives, trendlines, and action planning. **Compyle** enables staff, partners, and external providers to collect participant, survey, assessment, referral, and case-management data, then convert it into usable performance information and grant reporting. **Showcase** can be added when a United Way wants to publish accessible, visual impact dashboards for boards, donors, partners, residents, and the wider public.

THE CENTRAL RECOMMENDATION

United Ways should treat data infrastructure as mission infrastructure. When data systems are designed around outcomes, partner capacity, equity, and continuous improvement, they do more than simplify reporting — they create the conditions for stronger decisions, more credible donor communication, better partner alignment, and more transparent community accountability.



THE CASE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Why United Ways Need Outcomes Infrastructure

United Ways support complex networks of nonprofits, coalitions, public agencies, schools, health providers, businesses, volunteers, and community leaders — often spanning education, health, financial stability, housing, workforce, early childhood, youth development, and basic needs at once.

A single United Way may fund partners with very different reporting capacity, data definitions, software tools, service models, and funder requirements. That structure creates a recurring problem for community impact teams: partners may be doing meaningful work, but the United Way has no reliable way to aggregate performance, compare measures, interpret trends, or explain how separate grants contribute to shared community results. Staff can spend substantial time collecting spreadsheets, reconciling narrative reports, and preparing board and donor updates — without ever having enough time to actually use the information to improve strategy.

An outcomes infrastructure solves this problem by creating a common operating system for community impact. It gives United Ways and partners a shared framework, common measures where appropriate, clear reporting expectations, consistent data-collection routines, and a way to interpret results together. The purpose is not to collect more information for its own sake. The purpose is to make information usable for funding decisions, partner support, public accountability, and measurable improvement.

KEY TAKEAWAY

A United Way does not need a data system simply because it has reports to collect. It needs a data system because it has a community-change strategy to manage, partners to support, and outcomes to improve.

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THE FRAMEWORK

Why Results-Based Accountability Fits the United Way Role

Results-Based Accountability is especially useful for United Ways because it clarifies the difference between community conditions and program performance — two levels of work that are easy to confuse and costly to conflate.

Population accountability asks whether conditions are improving for whole populations: whether children are ready for school, families are financially stable, or residents are healthy and safe. **Performance accountability** asks whether a specific program or organization is delivering services well, and whether participants are better off after receiving support.

This distinction is essential for United Ways. Each individual agency is accountable for the participants it serves, while community-level results depend on many agencies working together. It is those contributory relationships — programs aligned toward a shared result — that produce community-level impact.

TWO LEVELS OF ACCOUNTABILITY



RBA keeps the two levels distinct — and shows how program performance rolls up into population-level change.

RBA gives United Ways a practical language for both levels. At the community level, leaders can define desired results, select indicators, review baselines, and identify the partners with a role to play. At the program level, funded partners answer three core performance questions:

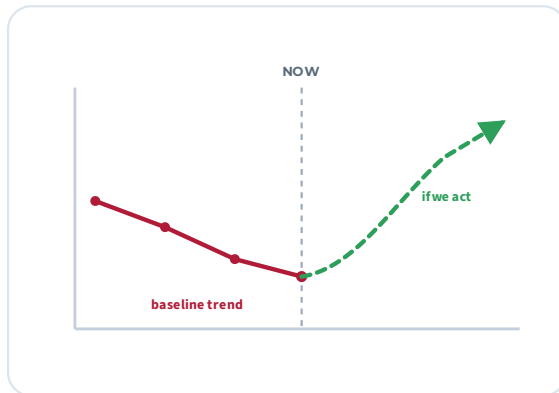
THE THREE PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS

How much did we do? • How well did we do it? • Is anyone better off?

These move reporting beyond output counts while still giving partners a realistic, understandable measurement structure.

RBA also supports disciplined action through **Turn the Curve** thinking. Rather than stopping when a measure is reported, United Ways and partners examine the trend, discuss the story behind the curve, identify the partners who can influence it, consider what works, and agree on next steps. This matters because community impact requires ongoing interpretation, learning, and adjustment — not annual reporting alone.

“TURN THE CURVE” — FROM A TREND TO ACTION



- 1 Review the trend
- 2 The story behind the curve
- 3 Identify the partners
- 4 What works
- 5 Take action



Reporting a measure is the start, not the end: partners read the trend, ask why, and decide what to do next — then repeat.

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THE SOFTWARE

How Clear Impact Software Supports Daily Practice

Clear Impact software translates RBA from a framework into a repeatable operating practice — because a framework is difficult to sustain if it lives only in training materials, spreadsheets, or occasional planning sessions.

United Ways need tools that make results, indicators, measures, data entry, interpretation, partner reporting, and communication part of normal work.

HOW THE CLEAR IMPACT SUITE WORKS TOGETHER



Comply collects the data, Scorecard turns it into managed performance, and Showcase communicates it — all under one RBA framework.

Scorecard Performance management & shared measurement

Scorecard gives United Ways one place to organize community results, indicators, performance measures, strategies, narratives, visualizations, and action plans. It helps partners see how program performance connects to broader community goals, and it lets staff aggregate information across programs and partners in ways that are difficult to maintain through spreadsheets and PDFs. Because it supports the RBA structure directly, Scorecard can become the working system where partners review progress and decide what needs to happen next — not just a report produced after the work is done.

Compyle Participant data collection & partner reporting

Compyle supports the data-collection side of the work with tools for intake forms, surveys, assessments, participant records, referrals, case notes, and longitudinal outcomes. For United Ways, reliable network reporting depends on the quality and consistency of the data partners collect at the program level. Compyle can reduce reliance on separate survey tools, spreadsheets, and case files while still fitting each partner's service model, and aggregated data can flow into Scorecard so participant information becomes usable performance insight.

Showcase Public-facing transparency & visual storytelling

When a United Way is ready to communicate progress externally, Showcase turns selected data and narratives into public-facing visual dashboards — valuable for donor communication, board reporting, public accountability, grantee visibility, and community education. The purpose is not to expose sensitive participant data, but to share appropriate, meaningful information in a way that is understandable and useful.

Services Training, consulting & implementation support

Software is most effective when paired with a clear implementation method. Clear Impact training, consulting, and technical assistance help United Ways and partners define results, develop performance measures, configure Scorecards, build partner capacity, use RBA language consistently, and establish routines for reviewing and acting on data. This service component is often the difference between a tool that collects reports and a system that changes how the network manages impact.

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PEER EXAMPLES

What United Ways Can Learn From Peer Examples

The following examples show how United Ways have used Clear Impact tools and RBA to strengthen performance management, partner reporting, impact communication, and continuous improvement.

Read them as learning cases rather than identical templates: each United Way must adapt its measurement system to local strategy, partner capacity, data-governance needs, and community priorities.

United Way of Central Iowa

Central Iowa shows how to manage a large community strategy with Clear Impact software. Through its *United to Thrive* work, the organization organized efforts around essential needs, early childhood success, education success, economic opportunity, and health and well-being — using Scorecard so that funded organizations could enter data on shared focus areas while staff and volunteer leaders used the information for performance review, community impact reporting, grant requests, and communication.

116

AGENCIES

190

PROGRAMS

\$70K+

SYSTEM SAVINGS

It also shows the power of connecting shared measurement to a clear result. For the Des Moines graduation rate, the four-year high-school graduation rate rose from **65.10% to 81.68%** after a community strategy used ends-to-means thinking and Scorecard to align efforts and track progress. Separately, moving from a previous case-management system to Compyle created more than \$70,000 in savings and made the system easier for staff and funded partners to use.

THE LESSON

Data becomes most useful when tied to a specific result that partners understand and can influence through coordinated action — and better infrastructure should reduce friction for partners, not add administrative burden.

READ THE STORY [United Way of Central Iowa & the Clear Impact Suite](#) ↗

[Conversations with Clear Impact: North Central Ohio](#) ↗

Berkshire United Way

Berkshire United Way illustrates how Scorecard can support grantee performance management, Global Results Framework reporting, partner engagement, and backbone support. The organization found that having partners enter their own data was another way to keep community partners engaged in evaluation, giving them access to information they could use throughout the year for grants and program improvement.

THE LESSON

Distributed data ownership strengthens both capacity and accountability. When partners enter and interpret their own data, they treat evaluation as part of program management rather than an external funder requirement — freeing staff to review trends, support partners, and ask strategic questions.

READ THE STORY [Social Sector Hero Spotlight: Berkshire United Way ↗](#)

United Way of Brazoria County

Brazoria County shows the value of introducing a shared framework before introducing a reporting tool. Funded partners had been submitting reports in different formats, making it difficult to see client progress across the network. The organization needed a simple framework, a consistent data-collection approach, and a way to connect partner performance measures to population indicators.

Clear Impact helped Brazoria County develop an RBA framework, train representatives from **32 funded partners**, and build Scorecards for regular partner reporting. In less than twelve months, the organization moved from a non-uniform reporting approach to a system where partner work was tied to strategies aligned with results and indicators.

THE LESSON

Technology adoption is strongest when partners receive training, measurement support, and a clear explanation of how their data contributes to larger community goals.

READ THE STORY [United Way of Brazoria County case study ↗](#)

United Way of Waco-McLennan County

Waco-McLennan County demonstrates how Scorecard can help a United Way communicate the combined contribution of funded partners across priority areas. Investing in partners across education, health, financial stability, and safety-net services, the organization worked with Clear Impact to build Scorecards around its four impact areas. Funded partners could update their own information, and aggregated numbers became visible in Impact Framework Scorecards. The organization also planned to add performance measures disaggregated by race and ethnicity, gender, and ZIP code.

THE LESSON

A well-designed system can answer questions about both individual partner performance and network-level contribution — and building in disaggregation reflects a more mature approach to understanding who benefits and where disparities remain.

READ THE STORY [Social Sector Hero Spotlight: United Way of Waco-McLennan County](#) ↗

United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County

San Antonio and Bexar County illustrates how RBA and Scorecard can support strategy around a specific population — in this case, expanding opportunities for youth. After implementing Clear Impact tools, including Scorecard and RBA, the initiative worked to clarify goals, track progress, foster collaboration, and advance positive outcomes for young people disconnected from education, employment, and community.

THE LESSON

Data systems are not only executive reporting tools. They also help initiative leaders, partners, and frontline organizations clarify goals, understand barriers, coordinate strategies, and monitor progress for populations with complex needs.

READ THE STORY [Conversations with Clear Impact: San Antonio & Bexar County](#) ↗

United Way of North Central Ohio

Serving Crawford, Marion, Morrow, and Wyandot Counties — together with Tiffin-Seneca United Way — United Way of North Central Ohio shows how Results-Based Accountability and Clear Impact can make impact more credible to donors. The organization paired RBA with a collective impact framework and built an individual Scorecard for each program funded through its annual Community Campaign, so every investment could be tracked against clear results.

It also invested in shared capacity, pursuing RBA Professional Certification across the whole organization — development and operations staff alike — so the framework's language and discipline were understood organization-wide rather than siloed in a single team.

THE LESSON

Transparent, credible impact reporting is a donor-relations strategy. As CEO Amber Wertman put it, *“having that Clear Impact dashboard really made a difference to our donors.”*

READ THE STORY [Conversations with Clear Impact: United Way of North Central Ohio ↗](#)

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MEASUREMENT

What United Ways Should Measure

A strong measurement system should not try to collect every possible data point. It should select the measures that are most useful for accountability, learning, decision-making, partner support, and public communication. These seven categories offer a practical starting point.

- 1 Community results & indicators.** The broad conditions of well-being the community wants to improve — children entering school ready to learn, families maintaining stable housing, residents accessing behavioral-health support, households achieving financial stability.
- 2 Program reach.** How many people, families, organizations, or neighborhoods received support — while making clear that reach is only the starting point for understanding impact.
- 3 Service quality.** How well services were delivered — timeliness, completion rates, engagement, referral follow-through, participant satisfaction, cultural responsiveness, accessibility, and attendance.
- 4 Participant outcomes.** Whether people are better off after support — improved school readiness, housing stability, employment, financial capability, mental health, safety, or social connectedness.
- 5 Disaggregated measures.** Whether outcomes differ by race, ethnicity, age, gender, geography, language, disability, income, or other locally relevant factors.
- 6 Partner & network health.** How well the collective system functions — partner participation, data-submission quality, referral coordination, shared-strategy alignment, and capacity-building needs.
- 7 Resource alignment.** How dollars, staff time, volunteers, grants, and in-kind resources connect to strategy, so leaders can assess whether investment patterns match community priorities.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Every measure should have a clear purpose. A United Way should be able to explain whether a measure informs strategy, demonstrates accountability, supports partner improvement, communicates impact, or helps the network understand disparities and gaps.

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BUILDING THE NETWORK

How to Build a Shared Data Network

A shared data network is not created by purchasing software alone. It requires governance, partner trust, aligned definitions, technical configuration, training, review routines, and a shared commitment to using information for improvement.

United Ways are well positioned to lead this work because they already serve as funders, conveners, backbone organizations, and trusted community partners.

THE UNITED WAY AS THE HUB OF A SHARED DATA NETWORK



Partners keep their own service models, but shared definitions and one measurement system let the United Way aggregate the whole picture.

Start with governance and trust

Begin by clarifying what data will be collected, who owns it, who can see it, how it will be used, and what level of aggregation is appropriate for public communication. Address partner concerns about comparison, privacy, and administrative burden before the reporting system is fully implemented. This helps create a data culture that is transparent, respectful, and useful rather than punitive.

Standardize what should be common — preserve what should be local

A network does not need every partner to measure everything the same way. Some measures should be standardized when programs share a strategy or outcome; others should remain specific to a program model. RBA helps maintain this balance by giving the network a common language without forcing every organization into identical reporting.

Use software to reduce administrative burden

Clear Impact tools are most valuable when they simplify how data moves through the system. Compyl supports participant-level collection and program reporting, Scorecard organizes measures and trendlines for review, and Showcase presents selected information for public communication. The goal is to reduce repeated data entry, decrease manual aggregation, and give partners information they can use for their own grants, management, and learning.

Create routines for interpretation and action

A shared data network should include recurring conversations in which staff and partners review trends, discuss the story behind the data, identify barriers, and decide on action steps. Without these routines, even a well-designed dashboard becomes a passive report rather than a tool for improvement.



TRANSPARENCY

Why Transparency Strengthens Trust

United Ways depend on trust from donors, boards, community members, public agencies, and funded partners — and data transparency is central to earning it.

Transparency does not mean publishing sensitive participant information or reducing complex community work to a few charts. It means making appropriate, meaningful information visible so stakeholders can understand progress, challenges, investment priorities, and learning.

For donors and boards, transparent data strengthens confidence that contributions are connected to a serious strategy for community results. For public agencies, it supports alignment with community indicators and population-level priorities. For funded partners, it clarifies how their work contributes to a larger agenda. For communities, it makes clear what is being done, what is improving, and where continued attention is needed.

TRANSPARENCY IS ALSO CAPACITY-BUILDING

Many small, community-based organizations are close to residents but lack sophisticated reporting tools. When a United Way provides access to shared data infrastructure, these organizations can communicate their work with greater professionalism, use data for their own improvement, and show their contribution alongside larger institutions.

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IMPLEMENTATION

A Practical Implementation Roadmap

United Ways implementing Clear Impact software and RBA should treat the work as a staged change process. This roadmap offers a practical sequence that can be adapted to local capacity and timeline.

PHASE	PRIMARY WORK	PRACTICAL OUTPUT
1 Identify & Train the Team	Identify and train the implementation team on RBA, Scorecard, Comply, and Showcase.	The skill set to scope the initial work and build the first Scorecards and Comply framework.
2 Align	Define community results, priority strategies, partner roles, and the purpose of shared measurement.	A results map showing what the network is trying to improve and how partners contribute.
3 Design	Select indicators and performance measures, distinguish population from program measures, and decide what to standardize.	A practical measurement framework partners can understand and use.
4 Configure	Build Scorecards, Comply forms, partner reporting templates, and dashboard structures reflecting the agreed framework.	A working Clear Impact environment for collection, management, and reporting.
5 Train Partners	Provide RBA training, software onboarding, measure-development support, and guidance on data quality and interpretation.	Partners who can enter data, interpret trends, and use it for improvement.
6 Pilot	Begin with a manageable group of partners or one impact area; review usability, refine measures, resolve governance issues.	A tested workflow to improve before expanding network-wide.
7 Scale	Expand to more partners, programs, and impact areas while supporting smaller organizations and staff capacity.	A shared data network producing aggregated insight across the strategy.
8 Learn & Review	Establish regular Turn the Curve conversations, review trends, identify disparities, document strategy changes, communicate progress.	A continuous-improvement cycle that turns reporting into decisions and action.

CONCLUSION

Better data for better communities

United Ways are built for collective action, and collective action requires collective information.

When partners work hard without shared measures, a United Way may still struggle to know whether separate efforts are adding up to measurable progress. When smaller nonprofits lack tools to communicate outcomes, the community misses important evidence of contribution. When reporting is treated as compliance, leaders lose opportunities to learn and improve.

Clear Impact helps close this gap by combining software, RBA training, and implementation support. Scorecard organizes results, measures, trendlines, narratives, and action planning. Complyle collects and manages participant and program data. Showcase makes selected results visible to boards, donors, partners, and the public. RBA provides the shared language and discipline that connects these tools to decision-making and continuous improvement.

The strongest reason for a United Way to invest in Clear Impact is not simply to improve reporting, but to build a shared outcomes infrastructure that helps the network manage strategy, support partners, communicate with credibility, and improve the lives of people and communities. The goal is better data in service of better decisions, stronger partnerships, and communities where more people are better off.

Sources & Further Reading

[Clear Impact — United Way Software](#)

[Clear Impact — Results-Based Accountability](#)

[Clear Impact — Scorecard](#)

[Clear Impact — Complyle](#)

[Clear Impact — Data Sharing Solution](#)

[Case Study — United Way of Central Iowa](#)

[United Way of Central Iowa & the Clear Impact Suite](#)

[Q&A — Berkshire United Way](#)

[Case Study — United Way of Brazoria County](#)

[Case Study — United Way of Waco-McLennan County](#)

[Conversation — United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County](#)

[Webinar — Scorecard & the United Way Global Results Framework](#)

LET'S BUILD IT TOGETHER

Turn data into lasting community impact.

For 25 years, government agencies, nonprofits, and funders have trusted Clear Impact to measure what matters — combining powerful software, expert guidance, and a proven framework to move from good intentions to real results.

Scorecard

Organize results, indicators, measures, trendlines, and action plans in one shared system.

Comply

Collect participant, survey, and referral data — then turn it into performance insight.

Showcase

Publish accessible, visual impact dashboards for boards, donors, and the public.

READY TO STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMUNITY IMPACT?

See what shared measurement could look like for your United Way.

Let's talk about your results, your partners, and a roadmap that fits your capacity and timeline.

[Schedule a Demo](#)

clearimpact.com/united-way-software



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