



Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly  
and Creative Works for Minnesota  
State University, Mankato

---

All Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other  
Capstone Projects

Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other  
Capstone Projects

---

2011

## Evaluation of Greater Mankato Area United Way's Annual Allocations Process from the Partner Agencies' Perspective

Erin A. Trytten  
*Minnesota State University Mankato*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds>

 Part of the [Nonprofit Administration and Management Commons](#), [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Trytten, E. A. (2011). Evaluation of Greater Mankato Area United Way's Annual Allocations Process from the Partner Agencies' Perspective [Master's capstone project, Minnesota State University, Mankato]. Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/etds/542/>

This Other Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects at Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato.

# Evaluation of Greater Mankato Area United Way's Annual Allocations Process from the Partner Agencies' Perspective

Erin A. Trytten  
Department of Social Work

## Background

Greater Mankato Area United Way (GMAUW) has a rich history in the greater Mankato area with its origins beginning in 1931. The Community Impact Division (CID) of GMAUW is responsible for the annual allocations process in which community impact teams of volunteers work with GMAUW staff and partner agencies to determine how best to allocate funds raised during GMAUW's annual campaign. This process has been in place since 2001, but has never been formally evaluated.

## Purpose

This project aims to provide information to GMAUW about the annual allocations process and level of engagement with partners from the partner agencies/programs themselves. GMAUW values their relationship with their partners and realizes the importance of evaluating their own practices to ensure that the relationship remain strong and mutually beneficial. GMAUW has never had the internal capacity to complete an evaluation of this nature and will use the findings to improve their processes.

**Research Question:** How do GMAUW's partners view the annual allocations process?

## Literature Review

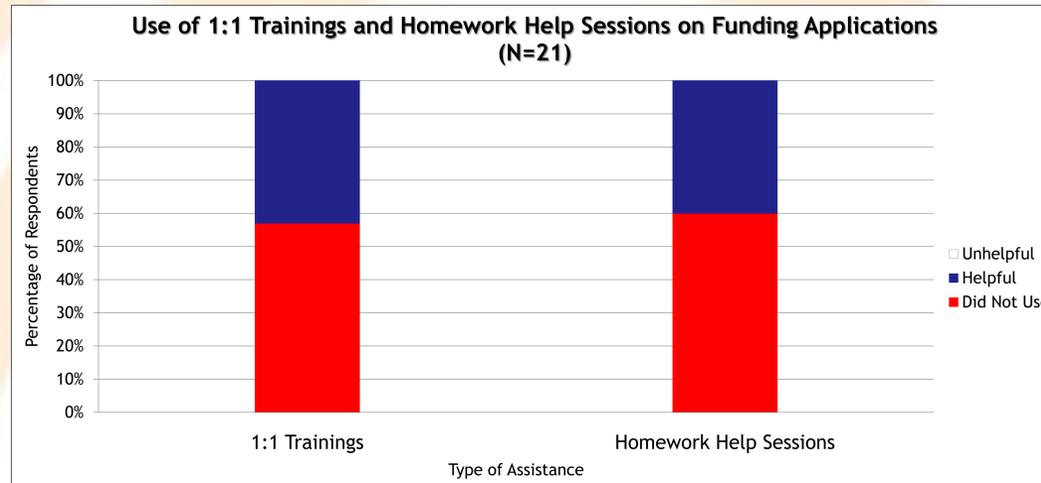
The importance of building capacity of organizations through collaboration in difficult economic situations is relevant to the struggles that GMAUW partners face as they are challenged to meet the demand for services with fewer resources (Milesen, Carman & Bies, 2010). Collaboration amongst organizations was further discussed in terms of relationships between grantors and grantees. The relationship between grantor and grantees needs to be reframed to think of it as one of equals because each has a valuable contribution and collaboration can facilitate more effective delivery of services for clients. Creating collaborative relationships between grantors and grantees is critical, but difficult so practitioners need to be aware of this so they can have a better understanding of how to improve it. A lack of collaborative relationships reduces the effectiveness of grantors and grantees to have open communication and future-oriented services (Fairfield & Wing, 2008).

A commonly identified struggle in the relationship dynamics between grantors and grantees similar to GMAUW is how programs can improve accountability measures and still convey the impact of their services. Sustainability of programs was also something that affected the relationship in the literature (Shaw & Allen, 2009). Nonprofit organizations value fairness, responsiveness, approachability, clear communication of goals and strategy, expertise, and community connections in their relationships with their grantors (The Center for Effective Philanthropy, 2004).

## Methodology

The sample for the present study consisted of 32 partner contacts as identified by the 2010 GMAUW funding applications. The study was designed to be administered as an anonymous online survey in which partner program/agency staff were asked to complete a survey that evaluated GMAUW's allocations process and level of engagement. Survey questions were both qualitative and quantitative. The individuals in the sample were invited to forward the survey to up to three additional staff within their organization that also work with GMAUW. Respondents were informed that their responses or lack of responses would in no way affect their current or future relationship or funding status with GMAUW. Data was gathered over a two week period and then analyzed. The total number of respondents was 21 (N=21). Analysis was completed using SurveyMonkey software and Microsoft Office Excel.

## Findings/Results



## Strengths

**The Application:**

- “Continuity from year to year”
- “Application is very basic and to the point”
- “Applications are very detailed”
- “Paperwork is received by impact teams before the meeting”
- “Forms “talk” to each other and populate data!!!”

### The Community Impact Division (CID) Team:

- “Review team really gets to know a program”
- “Engaged, prepared allocation panel volunteers”
- “Volunteers talking to Volunteers”
- “Like the site visits.”
- “Having community volunteers on the impact teams”
- “Committee very prepared and thoughtful”

### Benefits to Partner Agencies/Programs:

- “Requires agencies to review & analyze their mission/work, outcome, and costs”
- “Understanding why were are getting funding”
- “Allows agencies to promote their organization and programming to community stakeholders”
- “Some application preparation can be used when writing other grants”

### GMAUW

- “Very helpful staff”
- “ALWAYS someone willing to help”
- “[Staff] does respond quickly to questions”
- “Meet other people involved with United Way”
- “The evaluation meeting is well organized”

## Weaknesses

### The Application:

- “Standardized UW forms would be helpful from other locations”
- “Too long of forms to fill out”
- “Thought grant was a little cumbersome...”
- “Lots of paperwork for impact team to digest”
- “What really needs to be handed in?”
- “Have heard that review panels often don't have time to read application fully”
- “When something new is expected it needs to be specified more clearly...”

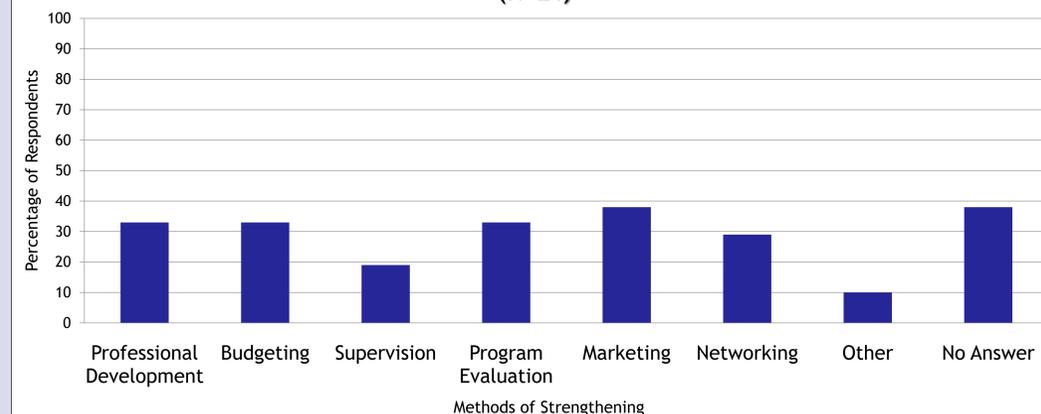
### Time Commitment:

- “Very time consuming with campaigning, application, then review each year”
- “Tedious, rigid forms”
- “...requires significant information gathering”
- “Very timely to complete”
- “Would always like to have more time, but understand the teams are volunteers”
- “Application is long and my hours are part time”
- “Even though streamlined-still time consuming”

### GMAUW:

- “The United Way Volunteers need to get into the field to see how the agencies work. It is hard to tell them over a table what we are doing. They need to see it.”
- “No feedback on how agency compares to others in community”
- “Wish we could do multi-year funding.”
- “Can't possibly fund all the needs of the community”

## How can GMAUW help strengthen your Agency/Program? (N=21)



## Findings/Results Continued...

- 100% of those who utilized 1:1 trainings on funding applications provided by GMAUW staff reported them to be helpful.
- 100% of those who utilized homework help sessions facilitated by GMAUW staff reported that they were helpful.
- 71% of respondents reported that submitting their application is an efficient process.
- 62% of respondents felt like the site visits that the CID teams make at agencies are long enough to clearly communicate the impact of their agency/program on the community.
- 43% of respondents reported that they have attended a GMAUW community issues forum.
- 52% of respondents reported that they have attended a GMAUW kick-off event.
- 52% of respondents reported that they attend the quarterly partner's meetings.

## Limitations

The present study, while providing valuable feedback from GMAUW's partners, has some limitations which must be addressed. The study has a relatively small number of respondents. The method of online self-administration may have resulted in lower response rates, especially in regards to qualitative open-ended questions. This limits the generalizability of the research to other populations or similar agencies, resulting in low external validity. Social desirability may have also produced biased responses in the respondents despite attempts to avoid this.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

This research indicated that GMAUW has areas where they could improve their strategies when engaging with partner agencies, but overall the findings reflected positive interactions. As a result of this project, GMAUW has had the opportunity to re-evaluate the manner in which they engage with their partner agencies and conduct the annual allocations process. GMAUW staff is looking forward to incorporating suggestions from the research and are constantly looking for ideas on how to make things more user friendly and innovative.

Overall, the respondents felt that strengths of GMAUW are how the allocations process involves CID volunteers from the community, the GMAUW staff, the application itself, and that going through the process actually benefits the partner organization. Recommendations for improvement include helping with marketing of agencies/programs to the community, professional development, budgeting, and evaluation. The results from the survey suggested that making the funding application more user friendly would be beneficial and it also demonstrated the desire for GMAUW to share more feedback from the review completed by the CID team.

## References

References are available from the author upon request.