

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT: A STRONGER, MORE STRATEGIC COMMUNITY BENEFITS PROGRAM

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Demonstrating the benefits a hospital provides to its community,

particularly the under served, has becoming increasingly more important. A well-planned community benefits program can serve both the people within the community as well as support the hospital's mission.

Consider the following four steps toward aligning your community benefits program with the hospital's business objectives.

Review your hospital's strategic plan.

If the community benefits program is not directly tied to the strategic plan, it's probably not strategic. During the review, consider which strategic priorities relate to the broad needs of the community. Are there any objectives in the strategic plan that could be advanced by adding a community benefit component?

Compare hospital and community health assessment data.

It's been said that you can't manage what you don't measure. The numbers may shed light on how well the hospital is serving the local population's greatest health needs. It also may demonstrate where there are gaps—areas of health needs that may not have been obvious. How can your hospital better serve the health needs of the community?

Take an inventory of your hospital's current community

benefits activities. Understanding where you've been will help you determine where you want to go. Evaluate the existing programs and the populations they serve. Carefully targeted programs are generally more successful. Setting clear objectives also helps in evaluating a program's success. If you don't know what the goal is, how can you be certain you're reached it? Clear measures also help to provide greater accountability.

Use existing guidelines, such as evidenced-based interventions to evaluate programs. This allows the program to be evaluated against national standards as well as previous periods of time.

And, finally, how much is being spent on each intervention or program? Keeping track of the budget allows you to clearly demonstrate a program's return on investment.

Move beyond "random acts of kindness"

toward making a commitment to integrate the hospital's mission into a community benefits plan that meets the documented needs of the community. Diagram the hospital's strategic plan, the documented health needs of the population (particularly unmet needs) and your hospital's existing programs. Where do they

overlap or link one to another? This will help identify which community benefit activities support one or more of the hospital's strategic goals or objectives. Consider how you can create better alignment across all three areas.

Also, evaluate the allocation of resources in these three areas. Resource can be shifted to support community benefit activities that mutually serve the greatest needs of the population as well as one or more of the hospital's strategic goals or objectives.

Succeeding in a rapidly-changing world, where return on investment for community benefits programs is

demanding, requires strategic planning, a little luck, and help from partners like Bottom Line Marketing & Public Relations, Inc. Let us demonstrate to you our health care expertise and how you may be able to leverage it to benefit your hospital and community.

At Bottom Line, we help our clients by creatively linking strategies to tactics that produce results. We tell our clients' unique stories using words and images that affect what stakeholders think, feel, say and do to support their business objectives.

We meet our deadlines. We keep our promises. We produce results. **That's our bottom line.**