

RISE PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

United Communities Southeast Philadelphia



Overview

United Communities Southeast Philadelphia (UCSEP) is a social services agency that for over 50 years has provided a wide range of services to Southeast Philadelphia-area residents and beyond. Serving a multicultural, linguistically diverse community of all ages, UCSEP provides housing and economic empowerment, case management, education, and other programs.

UCSEP is further enhancing its impact as one of 15 organizations selected to participate in the RISE Partnership's "Implementation" phase.

Working with RISE, UCSEP's Performance and Quality Improvement (PQI) department has learned a great deal about program evaluation, developing logic models, and putting those logic models to use. The department is focused on continuous



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United Communities Southeast Philadelphia

evaluation, feedback, and improvement for all internal and external practices across the agency. UCSEP even created a dedicated program evaluation coordinator position within PQI.

"There's a lot that goes into that actual, completed logic model," said Latesha Vosacek, director of strategic program operations and head of the PQI department. "It's not just something we create and look at, it's a living document."

While UCSEP's work with RISE started with its out-of-school time (OST) education program, learnings have spread to other programs as well, like housing and case management.

"We've been trying to take a program at a time and kind of lead them through this [evaluation] process," said Vosacek. "We've placed a higher value on that because of our relationship with RISE."

The organization has been able to build its evaluation skills and capacity

at the program level, and this culture of evaluation has begun to spread throughout the entire organization.

"I think we've gotten a lot of buy-in with it," said Suheidie Santiago, the new PQI program evaluation coordinator at UCSEP. "We just finished our housing logic model and they're already working with it and putting it to use ... it shows them a roadmap as to what they're going to be doing."

"Staff are taking it more seriously," added Koungvichaka Noun, PQI compliance specialist at UCSEP. "Before it was just like, 'Oh, whatever. What is this? What do they want from me?' Once they got into the logic model, they started understanding more and realized data is very important."

UCSEP has for many years collected and tracked data using an internal database. However, the support from RISE has helped the agency make better use of its data and track outcomes specifically.

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“We were already collecting a lot of data ... what we weren't really tracking were the outcomes, and the logic models are helping us track them now,” said Santiago. “We already know that we want to provide services, but what's happening afterward? Did that family buy a house? Were they able to keep that house? Things like that are going to be where we see a big impact.”

For UCSEP, the logic model process has helped identify activities and outcomes and determine what data questions need answering. Are there data points to support a particular outcome? How is data being measured? Who is responsible for collecting it? UCSEP has long collected a significant amount of information, but deciding how to prioritize and use what is being collected is a new focus for the agency.

“We focus a lot on quantitative data and not qualitative data,” said Sokheng Yim, PQI supervisor at UCSEP. “Being a part of RISE has opened my eyes [to qualitative data] ... so those are the questions that we're now asking the program directors.”

Beyond logic models, UCSEP has taken full advantage of all the resources RISE provides, from PowerPoint presentations to data collection tools, which have been instrumental in bringing evaluation to other departments and creating staff and leadership buy-in.

“We're literally using everything that RISE has provided ... they break things down in such a way that you can understand it, that's easy and relatable,” said Santiago. “I've used all of their stuff

and made it my own ... it's been super easy to explain this to other people."

"As a member of executive leadership in the agency, I can say that working and partnering with RISE has given our work a little more legitimacy," Vosacek added. "My boss is the executive director and he was fully supportive of this [program evaluation coordinator] role. He checks

in with me about it often and tries to make the other senior directors do better in terms of their relationship with our department, their relationship with data, with holding their staff accountable for data."

"[RISE] has been like a little feather in our cap," said Vosacek.



Established in 2018, The RISE (Readiness, Implementation, Sustainability for Effectiveness) Partnership supports promising Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey nonprofit organizations. The RISE Partnership Evaluation Funders Learning Community is the first convening supported by a network of funders in the region. The Learning Community is a collaborative effort with the Barra Foundation, Campbell Soup Company, Horner Foundation, Nelson Foundation, Philadelphia Foundation, PropelNext/Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Scattergood Foundation, and United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, and a partnership with YaleEVAL of The Consultation Center at Yale. The Partnership provides nonprofits with resources and training to strengthen organizational effectiveness and ensure a greater impact on social, economic, health, and educational conditions in communities, including the effects of racism, intergenerational poverty and trauma.