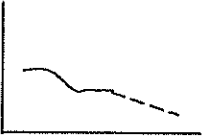


To be used to facilitate organization performance improvement

## United Way of Central Iowa Turn the Curve Template

<b>Department or Program:</b>
<b>Performance Measure:</b> 
<b>Story Behind the Performance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <i>Root Causes (ask "Why?" five times)</i></li><li>➤ <i>Positive and negative</i></li><li>➤ <i>Prioritize – which are the most important to address to "turn the curve" of the baseline?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Research agenda?</i></li></ul>
<b>Partners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <i>Who are <u>partners</u> who may have a role to play in turning the curve?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Does the story behind the curve suggest any new partners?</i></li></ul>
<b>What Works</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <i>Options for actions to "turn the curve"?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Research-based?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Low-cost/no-cost?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Off-the-wall ideas?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Research agenda?</i></li></ul>
<b>Action Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <i>Leverage: will turn the curve of the baseline?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Feasible (a.k.a. "reach")?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Specific: who, what, when, where, how?</i></li><li>➤ <i>Consistent with values?</i></li></ul>

# Turn The Curve Notes

Excerpts from Trying Hard is Not Good Enough by Mark Friedman

## STORY

What is the story? What are the causes and forces at work behind conditions in the community? In public health they call this step epidemiology. Epidemiologists seek to understand the cause of a disease as pointers toward a possible cure. Similarly, if we understand what is causing, say poverty or obesity, this will help us decide what actions to take that will best address these causes.

The word “story” is deliberate. Telling stories is the oldest form of communication, the oldest form of retained knowledge, and the oldest way in which we transform life experiences into useful lessons. This is the place to take stock of both positive and negative forces, what is working and what is not working. It is common to find many different opinions about causes. But it is not necessary to reach agreement on a single story. Diverse points of view are assets to be respected, not obstacles to overcome. In Results Accountability, diversity of opinion is the sign of a healthy process.

Trying to understand the story behind current conditions will generate a need for more information. An Information and Research Agenda is a disciplined way of pursuing unanswered questions about causes. The agenda can guide information gathering and if resources are available, the actual commissioning of research. Needs assessment are another tool to gather information to tell the story.

## PARTNERS

Who are the partners who have a role to play in doing better? No one program or agency can do it all alone. The work requires contributions from a wide array of partners, public and private, across the community. The work of adding partners is never finished. At each pass through the decision process, it is important to consider who is still needed at the table. The action plan should always have a component that addressed the recruitment and engagement of new partners. Remember that in practice, you never have everyone at the table. Inclusion is a process not an end point.

## WHAT WORKS

This is the central question: “What works to do better?” There are two natural pointers to answer this question. Each part of the story behind the curve points to an action (If we know that one of the causes of teen pregnancy is that kids don’t have enough to do after school, then this is a pointer to supervised recreation.) Each partner and potential partner has something important to contribute to turning the curve. Systematically consider each possible contribution.

Look at the research for what has worked in other places including best and promising practice. Research is important, but it is important that the thinking of the group not be limited by the research. The research world can tell us a fraction of what we need to know. We’ve got to make sure that we use our own common sense, our own life experience, and our own knowledge of the communities in which we live. Something that worked somewhere else might not work so well in your community. There must be room for learning and innovation.

Not everything is about money. Some of the most important things you can do sometimes require little or no money. After brainstorming, you will find that there are things that could be done the next day without another dime of money, things like distributing a list and providing training. Mark’s rule: Any plan that does not have some significant component that is no-cost or low-cost is not complete. If you give yourself and your people permission to think about no-cost and low-cost ideas, you will be amazed at what they come up with. Oddly enough, people need permission to think this way.

## ACTION PLAN

Planning without action is meaningless. If you do a good job of thinking about what works, you will come up with more ideas than you can actually do in a year. You will need a set of criteria to set priorities, create an action plan and budget. Here are four criteria that could be used to select the most powerful actions:

- **Specificity:** Is the idea specific enough to be implemented? Can it actually be done?
- **Leverage:** How much a difference will the proposed action make on results, indicators, strategies, performance measures and turning the curve? This is the most important criteria.
- **Values:** is it consistent with our personal, agency and community values?
- **Reach:** is it feasible and affordable? Can it actually be done and when? Low-cost and no-cost actions will rate higher here.