

Upstream Investments: Sonoma County Invest Early, Invest Wisely, Invest Together

Executive Summary

Kathy Koblick

The Upstream Investments Policy Initiative is a collective impact initiative chartered by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors in response to concerns over escalating criminal justice costs. The initiative seeks to reduce those costs and enhance community well-being by creating systems change. The systems change comes about by shifting the focus of policies, funding, and programming toward upstream investments in evidence-based and evidence-informed prevention and early intervention programs and services. The initiative supports this system-level shift toward upstream investments through:

- The Upstream Portfolio of Model Programs: a set of evidence-informed and prevention-focused programs that have met rigorous requirements to be included on one of Portfolio's three tiers: evidence-based practices, promising practices, and innovative practices,
- Technical Assistance (TA) and training for community-based organizations (CBOs) focused on how to effectively use evidence and data to enhance a program model, as well as for continuous quality improvement purposes,
- Targeting outreach and education to funders regarding the importance of investing in programs on the Portfolio; and,
- Facilitating multi-stakeholder collaboration to improve community outcomes on long-term indicators of success.

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Sonoma County

Sonoma County is home to some of the most beautiful landscapes in California. It is a destination for many with natural beauty all around and home to a world class wine industry. It is located to the north of Marin County and to the south of Mendocino County. The 2017 County Health Rankings places Sonoma County at #5 for overall health of 58 local jurisdictions in California. Sonoma County has a population of 502,146 with 26% of the population identifying as Hispanic, 64% white non-Hispanic and 1.5% African American. Despite relatively high ranking on overall health, Sonoma County has stark disparities in health, housing, and income.

In May 2016, the 2016 Sonoma County Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was released. The development of the 2016 CHNA report was a collaborative and comprehensive process involving a wide representation of key stakeholders.

The nine health needs that emerged as top concerns in the 2016 CHNA in Sonoma County highlight the significance of social determinants of health in building a healthier and stronger community. These results align closely with county priorities and previous findings from the 2013 CHNA process and the Portrait of Sonoma County. The following health needs were identified in Sonoma County: Early Childhood Development, Access to Education, Economic

and Housing Insecurity, Oral Health, Access to Care, Mental Health, Obesity and Diabetes, Substance Use, Violence and Unintentional Injury.

What is Upstream Investments?

The Upstream Investment initiative is sponsored by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and is led by a team of staff within Sonoma County Human Services. This initiative's guiding principal is that *all residents of Sonoma County will benefit from prevention-focused policies and interventions that increase equality and reduce monetary and societal costs*. As a community, Upstream Investments has developed four goals to guide the upstream investments and each goal has specific indicators of success. There are a total of 22 indicators of success distributed among the four goals. (See Figure 1, Upstream Investment goals and 26 indicators of success).

A key focus of Upstream Investments is to invest in agencies and individuals that Sonoma County contracts with to reach the four overall goals by helping them build capacity to be evidence-based and outcome oriented. This effort creates the ability to measure success and ultimately have concrete evidence that progress is being made on the four goals of Upstream Investments.

Contractors are provided extensive technical assistance and training in researching best practices, in developing logic models, and in the development of measurable outcomes for contracted program objectives to clearly demonstrate success and whether or not outcomes were met.

Upstream Investments created the "Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs." The portfolio is a collection of local, prevention-focused practices that are proven to work—that provide outcomes and evidence-based upstream programs and services throughout Sonoma County. The portfolio expands community-wide capacity to identify, implement, and fund evidence-based, upstream

programs. For an organization to be included in the portfolio, it must meet the requirements in one of three tiers: Evidence-Based Programs, Promising Programs, or Innovative Programs. (See Figure 2, Three Tiers of the Portfolio of Upstream Investment Programs).

History of Sonoma County Upstream Investments and Health Action Sonoma

In 2007, the Sonoma County Strategic Plan found the annual cost of the local criminal justice system had risen to comprise over half of the county's general fund. The trend of increasing criminal justice costs was projected to continue, and to therefore, reduce funds that had been historically available to sustain other critical services. In response, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors chartered *Upstream Investments Policy Initiative* and *Health Action Sonoma*.

In 2010, Sonoma County Human Services Department conducted a pilot of the Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs, a collection of upstream and evidence-based programs being implemented locally. An outreach campaign was launched to raise awareness about the goals of the initiative and the potential benefits of Upstream Investments Policy to organizations, County Departments, businesses, elected officials, and the community at large. County departments and Community-Based Organizations were encouraged to submit applications for their programs to be included in the Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs.

The Board of Supervisors continues to show strong support for Upstream Investments and Health Action Sonoma through continued investment in staff resources through the Human Services Department (Upstream Investments) and Health Services (Health Action Sonoma). It also uses the upstream lens to focus on prevention and evidence to guide funding decisions and assigns board delegates to participate on the Upstream Investments Committee. (See Figure 3, Upstream Investments Policy Initiative Structure).

A Collective Impact Initiative

Collective impact is a theory of how to organize in order to bring about systems change: one can achieve better progress if public, nonprofit, and private sector organizations organize their efforts and resources to tackle complex problems in an aligned way. A critical part of a collective impact initiative making progress rests on the ability of its members to organize effectively.

Upstream Investments is a collective impact initiative originally aimed at reducing criminal justice costs. In addition, and most importantly, the initiative goals are to enhance community well-being by creating systems change. Upstream Investments has been very successful putting into place the five core conditions of collective impact. These five core conditions include: a backbone support team, a common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communications, a learning culture, and a shared measurement system.

Key Elements of Upstream Investments

The Portfolio: The Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs is the key component of the Upstream Investments Initiative. It is a comprehensive collection of outcome-based and prevention-focused programs currently implemented throughout Sonoma County. All programs included in the portfolio have been reviewed and approved by the Portfolio Review Committee. To be approved, programs must meet specific criteria regarding the degree of evidence behind the program. Each program is placed on one of three portfolio tiers based on the degree that programs have met requirements of the specific tier (Figure 2). As of January 2015, 80 unique programs have been approved for inclusion in the Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs. These

programs address a broad range of needs including early literacy, parenting skills, kindergarten readiness, healthy eating, gang prevention, and injury prevention.

Technical Assistance (TA) and Training: TA and training is cornerstone to the success of Upstream Investments Initiative. Two full-time staff provide ongoing TA and training to organizations working towards portfolio inclusion and to those organizations on the portfolio and working to stay there, or, to move up into the next tier. It is estimated that it takes an organization 60-100 hours to complete the application for portfolio approval. Organizations receive technical assistance and training on the following components of the Upstream Investments Portfolio application: conducting literature review, developing a logic model, developing an evaluation plan, writing a manual of operations, an evaluation plan, and writing program policies and procedures.

Budget: The Upstream Investments Initiative has a budget of \$630,000 for FY 17/18. The budget is primarily staffing (85%) with the remainder in services and supplies (see Figure 4, Upstream Investments FY 17/18 budget). The program is a general fund allocation commitment from the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. The commitment from the Board of Supervisors (BOS) is what makes the wheels of this initiative turn. It is critical that BOS support continue for the ongoing success of Upstream Investments and the resulting outcome and evidence-based programming that exists in the county.

Staffing: The backbone support of the Upstream Investments Collective Impact Initiative is what makes this successful for the ultimate wellbeing of Sonoma County residents. The Upstream Investments staff is within the Sonoma County Human Services Department (see Figure 5, Upstream Investments Operational Structure).

Recommendation for Application to Marin County

Extensive resources are dedicated to Sonoma County Upstream Investments through the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. Upstream Investments is only possible due to ongoing Board of Supervisors support through allocation of resources. Marin County could incorporate a component of Upstream Investments into the development of contracts within Health & Human Services. It is recommended that Marin Health and Human Services explores the identification of two to three contractors willing to participate to pilot the inclusion of logic models and outcome-based evaluation plans in their scopes of work. This would require training of Health and Human Services staff that would then provide technical assistance and training for the selected contractors. Benefits to contractors would be increased competitiveness for funding and strengthen outcome-oriented programs. Benefits to Marin County would be an increase in outcome-based contracts and an increase in community benefit. It is proposed that a Senior Program Coordinator position be funded at .5 FTE through a creative process indicating no net county cost increase.

Conclusion

The most important aspects of Upstream Investments are the funding environment and a larger shift in the knowledge base of human services disciplines. The funding environment and the shift toward prevention and evidence-informed practice in the field reinforce one another as local, federal, and state funding sources encourage a focus on prevention and evidence. This funding environment and the growing consensus in the field regarding the value of prevention and evidence create a solid ground where Upstream Investments can grow. The general fund

financial support through the Board of Supervisors and the location of Upstream *inside* county government also will help to sustain Upstream in the future.

Challenges that Upstream Investments face are potentially the flip side of some of its supports. Given how critical the Board's support is for Upstream *and* the fact that the change in outcome data happens in the future, there is some concern about Upstream's future and the shorter one of election cycles. It is critical that Upstream spotlights the initiative's benefits before the county sees its long-term impact on community wellbeing.

While resource constraints are always a challenge, it is important to hold this in the context of some of the factors determining the *need* for Upstream. Upstream continues to pursue its goals of increasing provider capacity, expanding the funding supply, and conserving resources by ensuring that dollars are spent on programs that will – in the long run – save money and ultimately improve the wellbeing of community members.

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Figure 1: Upstream Investment goals and 26 indicators of success

Goal 1: The whole community is engaged in supporting the healthy development of children.

Indicators:

1. Child Maltreatment
2. Youth binge drinking
3. Youth drug use
4. Youth depression
5. Youth tobacco use
6. Teen births
7. Childhood obesity

Goal 2: Community members have access to education and training and are adequately prepared for the challenges of the future.

Indicators:

1. Preschool attendance (licensed childcare use as proxy)
2. 3rd grade reading level
3. 3rd grade math level
4. High school graduation
5. Higher education

Goal 3: All community members are well sheltered, safe, and socially supported.

Indicators:

1. Housing affordability (rent burden used as proxy)
2. Homelessness
3. Juvenile arrests
4. Adult arrests
5. Domestic violence
6. Gang membership
7. Youth connectedness to school
8. Hip fractures
9. Physical Activity

Goal 4: Sonoma County has a thriving diverse economy that produces economic security for all

1. Poverty (self-sufficiency used as a proxy)
2. Unemployment
3. Health insurance
4. Dental care
5. Fruit and vegetable consumption

Figure 2: Three tiers of the Portfolio of Upstream Programs are a continuum of evidence informed practice

Tier 1 - Evidence-Based Programs be:

- Listed on an evidence-based clearinghouse
- Implemented with fidelity (match the model program with Adherence, Dose/Exposure, Quality of program delivery, participant responsiveness)
- Plus requirements for tier 2&3

Tier 2 – Promising Programs must include:

- Literature review
- logic model
- manual of operations

- evaluation plan

Tier 3 – Innovative Programs must include:

- Literature review
- Logic model
- Policies & procedures
- Evaluation plan

Figure 3:

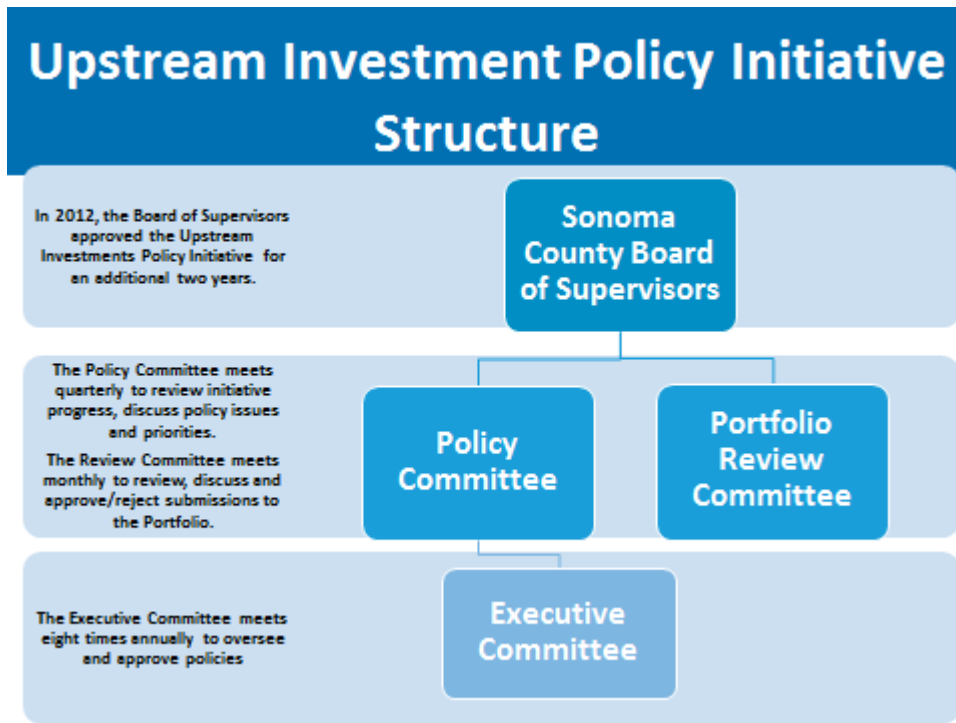


Figure 4: Upstream Investments FY 17/18 Budget

Upstream Investments Program Costs		
STAFFING	FTE	Amount
Program Development Manager	0.5	
Training & Technical Assistant Manager	1	
Training and Technical Assistant Manager	1	
Program Planning and Evaluation Analyst	0.5	
Administrative Aide	1	
Total Staffing		\$538,000
SERVICE AND SUPPLIES		
Liability Insurance		
Staff Development		
Outside Printing		
Equipment Rent/Lease		
Rent - Building		
Business Travel/Mileage		
Private Car Expense		
Courier Service		
Risk Management Benefit Admin		
Office Supplies		
Books/Media/Subscriptions		
Mail and Postage Supplies		
Computer Software/Licensing		
Total Services and Supplies		\$93,000
Total Staffing + Services and Supplies		\$631,000

Figure 5: Upstream Investment Operational Structure

