



United Way Mass Bay and the Faith & Action Initiative (A): Should Faith Be Funded?

In early 1997, United Way of Massachusetts Bay (UWMB) was emerging from what had been a difficult period of scandal, reduced revenues, and a realignment of the corporate philanthropic landscape. UWMB, like its counterparts across the country, raised money from donors—notably during an annual workplace fund drive—which it channeled to charities in the greater Boston area that it judged deserving. But the reexamination of mission forced on UWMB in the cauldron of the mid-1990s had resulted, many felt, in constructive and energizing reform. A new focus on prevention and youth programs, on funding those organizations most active and effective in their communities, had allowed UWMB to feel in some ways even more valuable despite the reduced number of dollars going to programs.

But precisely the sense of relief UWMB felt at emerging from crisis made it difficult to contemplate taking on what Senior Vice President Pat Brandes was proposing. As their meeting of March 27 approached, members of the Community Investments Committee (CIC)—which made the UWMB funding decisions—were variously intrigued and concerned. On the agenda was a proposal that UWMB set aside money—about \$350,000—to fund faith-based organizations working with inner-city youth specifically *because* their programs encouraged religious or spiritual belief. The proposed “Faith and Action” initiative would seek out programs that aimed at “spiritual transformation” for participants, fund them for three years, measure results, and—UWMB hoped—leave the grantee organizations stronger and more capable.¹

This was a radical departure for United Way, which traditionally insisted that all its affiliated programs be secular. United Way funded such groups as Catholic Charities or Combined Jewish Philanthropies strictly on the condition that faith be excluded from UW-supported

¹ The program was originally called Faith-in-Action, but after a legal challenge from another program of the same name changed its title to Faith and Action.

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programs. Now Brandes was proposing to stand that policy on its head because, as she argued, urban—especially black—churches were making the greatest difference in hard-to-reach communities and should be assisted. A number of congregations in Mattapan, in Dorchester, Roxbury and other areas short on traditional social services were running after-school programs, teen mentoring programs, and academic enrichment—with prayer added. What’s more, these programs seemed to be getting results in terms of keeping kids in school, reducing gang violence, and building community identity.

But a number of committee members were dubious. Who was to say churches were more or even as successful as standard social service organizations? How could one measure spiritual transformation? How could—or should—United Way monitor that no proselytizing occurred? How would UWMB balance funding to different denominations to avoid discrimination? Would adopting this initiative renew donor anxiety, so recently laid to rest, about United Way financial dealings? What might other affiliates (long-standing UWMB grant recipients) think? Committee members would have to weigh those concerns against the apparent benefits in order to decide whether or not to recommend to the board that UWMB fund faith-based organizations.

United Way Mass Bay—Brief History

The 1990s had been a turbulent decade for United Ways across the US. In 1992, United Way America President William Aramony resigned in the wake of a bribery scandal which severely undermined the credibility of the state-level United Ways as well. Aramony, who had been president since 1970, was convicted of defrauding the agency of some \$1 million.

In addition, the corporate fund drives which had fueled much of United Way’s growth were starting to run dry. The old model of the philanthropic boss who gives generously to his local community, with his employees right behind him, had given way to global corporations with little sense of local affiliation or responsibility. Start-up high tech companies did not necessarily endorse the community-based philanthropic philosophy of the banks and insurance companies of the past. Moreover, other programs for workplace-based charitable giving had proliferated and these lobbied employers to expand workplace giving options.

United Way of Mass Bay experienced all of these changes. The United Way chapter dated its founding to 1935, and had enjoyed decades of a near-monopoly of workplace giving programs. Now there was new competition. In Boston, for example, the Charitable Campaign Coalition in 1996 won out over UWMB to run the annual charitable campaign for area federal employees.² The National Association for Choice in Giving (NACG) claimed some corporate clients. In addition, individual charities not “affiliated” with United Way, but seeking a share of charitable dollars,

² Ricki Morell, “Marian Heard Wants Your Money,” *Boston Globe*, December 27, 1998. The Charitable Campaign Coalition is led by Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). The coalition serves as the fiscal agent for its member organizations, forwarding all funds with no overhead or fees assessed.

were making their way into corporate giving campaigns. As for the waning corporate sense of civic responsibility, one UWMB board member recalls the founder of a Boston-based high-tech company who said that his firm felt it had no obligation to support charitable organizations. Its job was to pay out high dividends. Shareholders could, if they wished, give those extra dollars to charity.

Between 1990 and 1994, annual donations to UWMB dropped from \$47 million to \$39 million. In 1992, when Marian Heard took over as president and CEO, the organization was \$11 million in debt. Heard determined to turn it around: over the next few years she cut staff 15 percent, axed some affiliates, and encouraged leadership giving (Massachusetts had ranked 87th among United Ways which could boast of individuals donating \$10,000 or more a year). Affiliates, those charities with a longstanding UWMB connection and accustomed to receiving level or increased UWMB funding year in and year out, were in for a particular shock. Brandes, who became Senior Vice President for Community Investments in 1992, recalls that one of her first duties was to announce to 200 affiliates that their UWMB grants would be cut 20 percent—an unprecedented step.³

Redefining the Mission

But the UWMB leadership did not merely tweak existing procedures and carry on with business as usual. Instead Heard, Brandes and the board of directors decided to take advantage of the forced cutbacks to redefine, sharpen and refocus what UWMB did. In April 1994, the board adopted what it called a Strategic Focus. The board resolved to recast UWMB as an advocacy organization concentrated on preventing social problems and serving youth. UWMB reaffirmed its mission “to unite the voluntary strength of our community to care for one another.” But now it would focus on three broad areas: build “the capacity of children, families and communities to address their own needs”; prevent crises; and invest in communities of greatest need.⁴

Like its counterparts across the country, UWMB enjoyed considerable discretion in awarding the bulk of its grants. The great majority—circa 80 percent—of public donations to UWMB went to a common pool known as Community Care (donors designated the remaining 20 percent to targeted causes or specific organizations). UWMB then distributed the Community Care dollars to charities—known as affiliates—in the greater Boston area with which it had a longstanding relationship. To be a UWMB affiliate, a charitable organization needed a strong track record as fiscally trustworthy and socially effective.

³ At the time, Brandes’ position was called Senior Vice President for Allocations; it later changed name and this account for clarity’s sake will use the later name.

⁴ *Investing in Our Community*, Report of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay Board of Directors, June 1994.

Strategic Focus. Under the new Strategic Focus, however, UWMB would shift from its time-honored practice of supporting individual agencies to supporting communities. UWMB would no longer be simply a channel for funds from donors to affiliates. Rather, it would now seek to influence the policy debate on social services, analyzing and advocating for unmet community needs. “We started doing some really different things,” recalls then-staffer Sarah Alvord.

With the launch of the Strategic Focus, this United Way began to get involved in advocacy and policy efforts, to get business leaders in town on board, to engage power in this community in a way we hadn’t in the past, in order to invest in and influence what we’d heard from all constituencies involved needed to change.⁵

This meant a difficult adjustment for some affiliates. UWMB decided that it would reexamine its affiliates, decide which ones no longer fit the mission, and cut their funding altogether. “We were going to reward those organizations that were actually closest to their constituents in the community, were most driven by the needs of the community, and where we could have the greatest impact with United Way dollars,” says Brandes.⁶ Over the next several years, the number of affiliates fell sharply, from 201 in 1993 to 181 in 1997. Moreover, many would become Specific Care affiliates, meaning they would receive only those monies which donors specified for their use.

UWMB also renewed its commitment to reach all needy Boston communities. UWMB had long prided itself on the comprehensive reach and spread of the charities it funded. But stubborn pockets with few or no UWMB-funded services remained. Under its new philosophy, UWMB resolved to make a conscious effort to “reach into neighborhoods and support those organizations which were doing the most impactful work in those neighborhoods,” comments Brandes. The CIC had initiated efforts in that direction even before the board approved the new Strategic Focus.

Community Investments Committee

The Community Investments Committee had decided to create what it called the Neighborhood Fund in September 1993. The CIC, with its 15 or so volunteer members, was one of the most powerful committee at UWMB. With the help of dozens of “Allocation Volunteers,” the committee reviewed and recommended for approval all UWMB funding. The board then formally approved the budget. The committee reported directly to the board and its chair automatically joined the board. CIC members came from prominent UWMB donor companies, or from other respected charitable foundations, or they were leaders in the non-profit community. Says Brandes:

⁵ Author’s interview with Sarah Alvord, March 10, 2004, in Cambridge, MA. All further quotes from Alvord, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

⁶ Author’s interview with Pat Brandes, Boston, MA, on March 4, 2004. Any further quotes from Brandes, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

“They really are the decision makers for the board on how money gets spent. The board listens to them.”

Neighborhood Fund. The CIC created the Neighborhood Fund in order to better reach 13 communities where needs seemed larger than average.⁷ Of those 13, three neighborhoods in particular—Chelsea, Chinatown and Mattapan—were singled out for special attention because of their high poverty rate, the high percentage of children in the communities, and the minimal presence of UWMB affiliates. In Mattapan, for example, nearly 1/3 of residents were under 18, 36 percent of those children lived below the poverty level, and 54 percent were in single-parent homes.⁸

CIC funded the first Neighborhood Fund projects on an ad hoc basis out of its discretionary Community Care dollars. In June 1994, however, during the budget process for the next fiscal year, the UWMB board voted to provide separate funding for the Neighborhood Fund. The dollar amount was not large. Of an overall grants budget of \$26.2 million, UWMB directed \$146,800 for Allocation Year (AY) 1995 to the Neighborhood Fund.⁹ In addition, UWMB counted toward the effort of serving the 13 Neighborhood Fund communities an extra \$219,000 already added to the allocations of affiliates serving those communities (which was reflected in another part of the budget). Neighborhood Fund grants were for only one year, they were modest sums, and they were specifically for non-affiliates.

For the next several years, the amount allocated to the Neighborhood Fund rose steadily, but never to significant amounts. From the original \$146,800 in AY1995, funding went to \$519,500 for AY1996 (from a total budget of \$25.9 million), while in AY1997 the Fund got \$645,000 from the overall \$26.9 million budget. The difficulty was that, especially in Mattapan, it proved maddeningly difficult to find anything to fund. Traditional social service agencies were conspicuous by their absence. The only organizations that seemed to be doing anything effective were the churches—and the United Way was very clear about the separation between secular and church-based activities. It did not fund religious programs.

Churches as Leaders

The church in inner-city Boston, however, had in the early to mid-1990s assumed a new prominence. The black churches, in particular, had adopted a newly activist philosophy which brought ministers out from behind the pulpit and onto the streets. Their immediate incentive was

⁷ The 13 were: Cambridge, East Boston, Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Chinatown, the South End, South Boston, Chelsea, Lynn, Waltham, and Quincy.

⁸ *Investing in Our Community*, Report of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay Board of Directors, June 1994, p.9.

⁹ *Investing in Our Community*, Report of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay Board of Directors, June 1994, p.26. The UWMB fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30; FY1996, for example, started on July 1, 1996. But because UWMB raises funds in one year for use in the next, it also uses the term Allocation Year (AY) to refer to the year in which funds are raised. Thus AY1996 started on July 1, 1995; AY1997 started on July 1, 1996 etc.

gang violence, which had risen to epic proportions in Boston. In 1990, there were 152 homicides, fed by crack cocaine and turf-based gangs.¹⁰

In 1992, some 40 churches banded together into what they dubbed the TenPoint Coalition, dedicated to addressing the violence in their midst. The leaders were the Reverends Ray Hammond, Eugene Rivers III and Jeffrey Brown.¹¹ While relations with law enforcement were at first hostile, by mid-1996 the clergy and police recognized that they could be more effective through collaboration than confrontation. Under Operation Cease-Fire, ministers helped police identify gang members, made home visits, and held community meetings. By the end of 1996, the homicide rate had fallen to 59. In 1997, it was 43.

The churches directed this energy into other streams as well. To address what they saw as the underlying causes of the street violence, they started daycare programs, after-school tutoring programs, peer mentoring programs and others. A few Boston-area private foundations encouraged this work. Nationally, the Lilly Foundation as well as the Ford Foundation had pioneered private philanthropic support to churches. In Boston, the Hyams Foundation began in 1990 to direct funds to these churches and their community outreach programs. Hyams championed what it dubbed the Black Church Capacity Building Project.

UWMB's Pat Brandes, for one, was envious of Hyams' ability—as a private foundation—to fund religious activities. “In my heart of hearts,” she says, “I wanted [UWMB] to find a way to get involved in this because I could see that, in the communities of color, the black church was really important... [But] it seemed almost impossible to think about the United Way getting involved in this.”

She spoke often with Sylvia Johnson, associate director at Hyams, about the foundation's work with black churches. Brandes considers herself a Christian, and still remembers vividly a comment the outgoing CEO made at his goodbye party shortly after Brandes joined United Way in 1989. “In his speech,” recalls Brandes, “he spoke about how United Way does God's work. And I was really struck, wondering what does he mean by that? I had never thought about United Way as being anything but highly secular.”

But his words resonated with her and, seven years later, Brandes thought she might have found an opportunity to make concrete what that outgoing CEO had said. With the right strategy, it might be possible to nudge UWMB toward direct interaction with the faith-based community in Boston. But it would not be easy.

¹⁰ See Bernard E. Harcourt, ed., *Guns, Crime, and Punishment in America*, chapter by Jenny Berrien and Christopher Winship “Should We Have Faith in the Churches?” New York University Press, 2003, pp. 222-248.

¹¹ Hammond founded and ran the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Mattapan; Rivers was founder and pastor of the Azusa Christian Community in Dorchester; and Brown was pastor of the Union Baptist Church in Cambridge.

Community Ventures Committee

United Way was a quasi-public organization, secular and accountable to the public. Even though it was founded in 1887 in Denver by a group of ministers, it had always stayed away from funding any program which expected participants to profess a particular faith or faith in a deity. As UWMB board member Robert Cowden puts it: “The whole tilt was that this is a secular organization here at the United Way... We fund secular services, not anything to do with the promotion of faith.”¹²

But United Way Massachusetts Bay did have the Community Ventures Committee (CVC). This was a small, entrepreneurial subcommittee of the Community Investments Committee.¹³ CIC had created CVC specifically to provide venture grants to promising organizations outside the usual UWMB purview. Among other functions, CVC helped UWMB identify projects which met the requirements of the Neighborhood Fund, and many of the programs CVC recommended were financed out of the Neighborhood Fund. Committee members included venture capitalists and other individuals not ordinarily involved in UWMB decisions. “It was a fairly radical little group,” recalls Brandes.

The committee provided one-time grants of \$10,000 to \$50,000 to non-affiliates. The grant recipients were entrepreneurial, small-scale, grassroots organizations—not affiliates in training. Sarah Alvord was the UWMB director assigned as staff to the CVC. It was always clear, says Alvord, “that these funds were not the first step to affiliation. These are venture grants, and we were experimenting.” In the mid-1990s, for example, the CVC funded programs for adolescent girls under the “Today’s Girls... Tomorrow’s Leaders” initiative. It also provided monies for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) youth programs. “Some of the initiatives were controversial, some weren’t,” comments Alvord.

With Neighborhood Fund priorities in mind, the committee also kept a special eye out for opportunities in the communities of Mattapan, Chinatown and Chelsea. In June 1996, for example, CVC recommended for funding the Mattapan Community Development Corporation, the Chinatown Coalition and the Horizons Transitional Housing Program in Mattapan. But CVC members quickly discovered that while these social service agencies did a good job, another group—local churches--was reaching communities of youth untouched by agencies. In Mattapan, especially, the churches were the only organizations serving kids. “Historically,” says former FAA staffer Kim Haskins, “black or minority populations went to churches before they went to service organizations, and that still is true for a large number of people.”¹⁴

¹² Author’s interview with Robert Cowden, February 25, 2004, in Boston, MA. All further quotes from Cowden, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

¹³ The committee was originally called the CI Subcommittee.

¹⁴ Author’s interview with Kimberly Haskins, March 4, 2004, in Boston, MA. All further quotes from Haskins, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

The CVC, therefore, looked for programs to fund that might have a church affiliation, but were not faith-based. So for AY1995, for example, the committee recommended and the board approved a grant of \$20,000 for an organization known as Mattapan/Dorchester Churches in Action (MDCA)—an interfaith coalition of churches. The UWMB monies were intended to help MDCA close drug houses, secure funding for community policing, and repair parks and playgrounds.¹⁵ The grant went well; two years later, in June 1996, the CVC recommended a second grant for MDCA of \$15,000 to support a summer daycamp.¹⁶ In 1996/97, UWMB also funded three other faith-based projects through the Neighborhood Fund: the Hyams Foundation Black Church Capacity Building Project, Essex County Community Organizing, and the Youth Ministry Development Project.¹⁷

But in accordance with UWMB policy, these grants were given to secular programs that happened to have a church affiliation. There was no concerted effort to fund organizations like Churches in Action. But then came the meeting with New Covenant Church.

“Blown out of the water”

Brandes remembers vividly the CVC meeting at which a new face appeared to present a program, one out of Mattapan which would probably meet the Neighborhood Fund requirements. It was December 1996, and the presenter was Chris Hill from the New Covenant Christian Church in Mattapan. Hill ran a program for youth at risk which introduced hundreds of teenagers to the benefits and opportunities of a college education. His presentation, says Brandes, “blew everybody out of the water.”

There wasn't a person in the room that didn't say 'Wow, this is phenomenal!' The energy, the results, everything about this program just far outshadowed everything else.

The committee voted to give the program \$10,000. During the discussion, however, one CVC member spoke up with special energy. “I said, ‘This is kind of strange, but if we want to help Mattapan more, then we have to augment the black churches,’” says Ann Romney, who also served on the UWMB Board.¹⁸ “I could see Pat [Brandes'] eyes get big, and I thought ‘I've really blown it.’ I thought now I'm going to the principal's office because I suggested something that is not appropriate at all.”

¹⁵ UWMB 1994 Annual Report.

¹⁶ CI Subcommittee Recommendations to Community Investments Committee, June 20, 1996. UWMB internal document.

¹⁷ Source: CIC 1997 Minutes (date missing).

¹⁸ Author's interview with Ann Romney, March 22, 2004, in Belmont, MA. Any further quotes from Romney, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview. Ms. Romney's husband, W. Mitt Romney, had run unsuccessfully for the US Senate in 1994. In 2002, he won election as governor of Massachusetts and took over in 2003.

Brandes did take Romney aside immediately after the meeting, but to praise, not to chide her. Brandes could see that Romney's interest had been piqued. She also knew her as a devout, life-long Mormon. "I told her, 'I have always wanted to start something that would focus on faith-based programs. I wonder if you'd be willing to chair it,'" recalls Brandes. Romney says she protested that she was too busy to take on any additional commitments, but then acknowledged that this was "so different... I said I'd love to do it."

Romney had long been an advocate of faith-based social programs. She plainly recalls pulling up alongside a van full of boys headed for a juvenile detention center, and wishing she could get those children the kind of help she knows works. She says:

I thought those kids need to know that someone loves them and cares for them on such a deep level that they can change their lives. That's what the faith piece does that's different from other agencies—it can change their heart... I've seen time and again that these programs can change their hearts and get them help.

Brandes gave Romney a packet of materials to read about black churches and their history in the Boston area. She also sent her out to tour Boston's black churches and church-based programs with Kristen McCormack, a community activist and management expert on contract to UWMB who knew urban Boston both personally and professionally. McCormack was working on the CVC project for girls and leadership, but she and Brandes had long discussed how to involve UWMB in faith-based programs.

After the CVC meeting, remembers McCormack, Brandes reported that Romney "said she would be really interested in pursuing an initiative focused on faith-based youth programming. We just have to do this!"¹⁹ McCormack readily agreed to pull the program together logistically. She had been on both sides of the philanthropy table, as both a foundation trustee and nonprofit grantee. She also had experience developing foundation guidelines and funding criteria.

McCormack's experience with programs in her own church, among other places, led her to support faith-based organizations. "My experience has been that that element of faith really was value-added, that faith-based programs have more of an opportunity to sort of change hearts as well as change lives," says McCormack. "I had witnessed that firsthand."

McCormack and Romney immediately began a series of fact-finding interviews, speaking eventually with 15 people in eight interviews. They wanted to know what organizations existed that might be role models for others, which were struggling but could benefit from UWMB funding, and who were the community leaders a faith-based initiative might work with. Says McCormack: "It was finding out what's going on in the community, what are their most effective

¹⁹ Author's interview with Kristen McCormack, March 16, 2004, in Boston, MA. All further quotes from McCormack, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

programs, why do they think they're effective." Unofficially, the two women were identifying both potential members for a steering committee, and potential grant recipients.

Meanwhile, Brandes (who besides being Senior Vice President for Community Investments was also UWMB Chief Operating Officer) worked on building internal support for the idea, and on the financial picture. She met with the chief financial officer to determine how much funding might be available. Using as a model the Community Ventures Committee, which had a budget of roughly \$300,000, she argued that a faith-based initiative deserved a like amount. The staff team also approached UWMB CEO Marian Heard for her support. Heard, says McCormack, "was very enthusiastic."

But the idea was still only a concept. It needed fleshing out.

Choosing a Co-Chair

One urgent matter was to identify a co-chair to serve with Romney. "I knew I had to have someone like Ann, who was also on our board of trustees, to represent the initiative at the board level," says Brandes. "Her credibility and leadership were really important. On the other hand, we also needed a co-chair—someone that had credibility in the community of faith in the neighborhoods—who could represent the initiative in the community." Her choice was Gloria White-Hammond.

White-Hammond was a pediatrician, who in early 1997 was within months of earning a degree from the Harvard Divinity School. She and her husband, Ray Hammond, had started the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Mattapan in 1988. She had created youth programs at the church—including a writing program dubbed The Write Thing for troubled teenage girls. She knew the urban faith-based community inside out.

The only problem was Brandes did not know White-Hammond; she had heard her speak once. Moreover, Sylvia Johnson at the Hyams Foundation cautioned Brandes against approaching White-Hammond unless she was absolutely sure United Way would follow through. Johnson also advocated strongly for a separate committee, comprised of decision-makers from the faith-based community, to administer the new initiative. Remembers Brandes:

[Johnson] really challenged me with this. How were we going to structure this? Who was going to have the power? She said, 'You've got to prove to me why United Way is actually going to do anything right by this community.' She knew how corporate United Way was.

So Brandes prevailed on Johnson to arrange an interview with White-Hammond. Recalls Brandes: "I used up all my chits with Sylvia to convince her to call Gloria and get her to agree to take a meeting with UW to hear us out." In February 1997, Romney and McCormack met White-

Hammond at an *Au Bon Pain* restaurant in Harvard Square. White-Hammond listened with growing enthusiasm—but made it clear she could not accept any commitments until after her graduation in June and surgery scheduled for the summer. Says White-Hammond:

I was really far too frazzled to figure out whether we could do it. I didn't know either of them, as a matter of fact. But I was certainly intrigued by the notion of providing funding for faith-based groups.²⁰

She had seen how effective faith could be, especially with teenagers. Her girls' writing group had started with a strictly secular philosophy. But at a moment of crisis, she recalls, "we only knew to pray. That was a real breakthrough in terms of our interaction." Moreover, she knew that church communities could provide a constant caring that few other organizations offered. "I say, 'You graduate from high school; you don't graduate from church family.' So it's a cradle-to-grave operation," notes White-Hammond. In her church, if parishioners had landlord issues, the church found a lawyer. If a mother could not read, it found a teacher to tutor her. "It was all of those sort of things that made it clear to me that there's something different that church has to offer that we should capitalize on," she says.

The basics. At the restaurant that day, the three women discussed what the basic tenets of a faith-based grants program should be. In keeping with the Strategic Focus, grants should go primarily to youth programs, or to those which built community. The women agreed that a non-negotiable element would be inclusivity. UWMB could not support any program which excluded, for religious or other reasons, any potential participant. Moreover, UWMB-funded programs could not proselytize or seek to convert. But it was equally important that the programs contain an intentional faith element. It would be that which set the faith-based initiative apart from other UWMB projects. Recalls White-Hammond:

Ann was the one who I saw as being very clear about in some sense requiring more than just saying it's OK to expose your kids to faith, that that would be one of the things that we would in a sense require, and that would distinguish our portfolio from the rest of the United Way: that we would be faith-intentional in that sense.

When they parted, they had secured White-Hammond's provisional agreement to join as co-chair in September 1997. At the moment, however, no formal initiative existed. Romney, Brandes and their allies had to persuade first the Community Investments Committee, and then the full board, that UWMB should take on a project which turned on its head one of the chief principles in the canon of grantsmaking held dear by staff and volunteers alike: separation of religious and secular activities.

²⁰ Author's interviews with Gloria White-Hammond, March 17 and March 20, 2004, Boston, MA. Any further quotes from White-Hammond, unless otherwise attributed, are from these interviews.

Selling the Committee

Brandes knew that careful planning would have to go into a presentation. “I was worried,” she remembers, “that this would not get through the board and the Community Investments Committee. I felt like this was really radical for United Way.” She saw two key questions she would have to answer: what made it okay for philanthropy to get involved with churches; and how could UWMB ensure that programs it funded were inclusive?

On the first point, Brandes had confidence in the precedent set by the Hyams Foundation for philanthropic involvement with churches. She also planned to point to the critical role black churches had played in the so-called Boston Miracle, which so dramatically reduced the city’s crime rate. As she saw it, “the faith-based community has a big role to play in keeping our communities healthy.”

Therefore, the United Way should be supporting those efforts. It’s a part of our entrepreneurial outreach, to make sure that we’re helping those problem solvers out there get the work done.

McCormack confirms that “there had been a recognizable and very public success of faith-based organizations, through the TenPoint Coalition and the work on gangs.”

The faith-based community was being given credit, both locally and nationally, for stemming a rise in teen violence and in fact turning it around. And the collaboration between the Boston police department and the faith-based community was recognized, both locally and nationally, in law enforcement circles, in media circles... I think it absolutely gave some credibility.

On the issue of inclusivity, Brandes could only assure committee members that grants guidelines for the faith-based initiative would require that programs be non-exclusionary. Finally, Brandes planned to invoke with committee members what she considered a powerful argument in favor of adopting a faith-based grants program. Namely, that in the 13 communities served by the Neighborhood Fund, UWMB itself was being exclusive in not allowing grants for faith-based organizations. “I tried to position this as a gap in what we were doing, and filling a gap in what we were doing,” she says.

Ducks in a row. By mid-March, Brandes felt ready to lobby the CIC for a UWMB faith-based initiative. The co-chairs were ready to go; Romney had begun to research the landscape and already knew of some promising potential grant recipients; they had powerful arguments both for why it would be wise to pursue a faith-based grants program, and foolish to ignore its potential for effecting lasting change in needy communities. The CIC was scheduled to meet on March 27.

But the CIC would not be an easy sell.²¹ The committee members were stalwart supporters of United Way traditions, including its historic religious neutrality. As Brandes acknowledges:

They tended to be people who knew a fair amount about philanthropy and social issues, who had grown up through the sixties when essentially secular humanism was the only way to look at things. So for them, it would be challenging to say it's okay to have faith in the equation.

Committee chair Kathryn Plazak could be expected to raise some of the most pointed objections. In fact, as Brandes soon discovered when she approached Plazak to brief her on the meeting's agenda, Plazak was disturbed. "I have to tell you, I was very skeptical," says Plazak.²² Plazak was head of public affairs for a large insurance company and oversaw its charitable giving program. At the company, she notes, "we had long had a policy that we would not fund religious institutions. Part of the reason was because we felt uncomfortable with money potentially being used for religious proselytizing." She felt United Way was correct in taking a similar approach.

But Plazak had a philosophical objection to faith-based programs in general. She elaborates:

Coming from a personal belief structure as a non-believer, I have always had significant doubts about why one needs to think about religion as playing a role in anyone's betterment... I don't buy the notion that de facto if there's a church or a synagogue involved, or belief in God is mentioned, that that's going to make somebody a better human being.

Plazak was confident that her views would be heard and considered at the CIC meeting. The committee's members, she says, were thorough and careful stewards of UWMB funds.

It was very rare that you'd present something and everybody would say 'fabulous.' They were deep thinkers, and so around the table there was always at least the effort to make sure that we'd thought through the consequences and any unintended outcomes.

Elizabeth B. Smith, executive director of the Hyams Foundation, was also a CIC member. She doubted the faith-based initiative would pass the CIC and the board. "I was not sure that it was ever going to fly at United Way," she says.²³

²¹ The 15 members in March 1997 were: Shirley Carrington, Caroline Chang, Ruth Fein, John Grumbacher, Richard Harter, Mary Ann Jarvis, Elizabeth Knauss, Paul Murphy, Kay Paine, Kathryn Plazak, Joel Sherman, Elizabeth B. Smith, Patt Taylor, Juanita Wade, and Toby Yarmolinsky.

²² Author's telephone interview with Kathryn Plazak, March 12, 2004. All further quotes from Plazak, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

²³ Author's telephone interview with Elizabeth B. Smith, April 2, 2004. All further quotes from Smith, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

Given the situation United Way was in—it had to raise a lot of money, it had to make a lot of donors happy and comfortable with what it was doing—I didn't think some of the corporate funders [who are] board members would go along with it, because I think within their own corporations they always tried to stay away from any kind of giving that actually went specifically to churches.

This initiative was not like funding Catholic Charities or Combined Jewish Philanthropies. Both of those organizations were independently-chartered non-profits separate from any church or congregation. Now UWMB proposed to fund individual churches, many of them self-organized Protestant denominations, or smaller social ministry programs. “That was the real difference,” says Smith.

As the committee convened on March 27, both Brandes and committee members knew they faced a difficult afternoon. It was the committee's job to make sure it raised and answered the difficult questions, questions which even Brandes acknowledged had merit. It was likely that some committee members would question whether a faith-based program could confuse the United Way mission. For example, once UWMB funded a church program, what would United Way do if the church took a position on a social issue—for example, homosexuality—antithetical to the views held at UWMB? Other committee members might worry about alienating donors.

There was also likely to be resistance to the very idea that faith-based was better. Why, as Plazak had asked, was there an assumption that just because a program was affiliated with a church, it would produce better or even similar outcomes to secular programs? As for results, how could one possibly measure spiritual transformation? Then there was the question of how to distinguish “spiritual transformation” from proselytizing. How could UWMB ensure that one occurred but the second did not? Finally, there were questions of funding equity and fiscal responsibility. How could the committee justify taking an additional \$300,000 from traditional programs to fund this initiative? The committee would have to weigh the pros and cons of moving forward with a faith-based grants program within the overall strategy of UWMB.

Exhibit 1
Faith in Action Committee²⁴

Co-Chairs

Ann Romney
Community Volunteer

Imam Taalib Mahdee
Masjid-Al-Quran Imam

Rev. Gloria White-Hammond, M. D.
Co-Paster
Bethel A.M.E. Church, Boston

Kristen McCormack
Community Volunteer

Members

Patricia Brandes
Chief Operating Officer
United Way of Mass. Bay

Roberta Messina
Community Volunteer

Rev. Roberto Miranda
Pastor
Eglesia Bautista Central

Robert E. Cowden, III, Esq.
Casner and Edwards

Paul R. Murphy, Esq.
Foley, Hoag & Eliot

Fr. Dan Finn
St. Mark's Church

Rev. Wesley Roberts
Executive Director
Black Ministerial Alliance
Pastor
Peoples Baptist Church

Rabbi William Hamilton
Congregation Kehillath Israel

Sylvia Johnson
Hyams Foundation

Karin M. Wall
Executive Director
Bruce Wall Ministries

Nancy Kaufman
Executive Director
Jewish Community Relations Council

²⁴ Source: "Evaluating Faith in Action: An Initiative of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay," report of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, October 1999.

Exhibit 2

Funding Criteria

The following criteria were used by volunteers to evaluate agencies for funding.

Excellence, Management & Governance

- Demonstrates effective/efficient human-resource management
- Demonstrates effective/efficient financial management
- Has high quality and diverse leadership on board and staff
- Shows clear and strategic vision
- Responds appropriately to UWMB volunteer comments
- Submits timely annual audits and required UWMB reports

Capacity-Building/Prevention

- Serves as a family-focused neighborhood resource with demonstrated support from the community
- Focuses on self-sufficiency and helping individuals help themselves; establishes peer support and self-help models
- Builds the capacities of children, families and communities to prevent problems
- Values the diversity of the community and promotes inclusiveness
- Builds leadership among community residents
- Involves residents/participants in decision-making and prioritizing

Results-Outcomes

- Defines how outcomes are measured and evaluated
- Demonstrates significant results for individuals and/or in the overall life of the community
- Ensures resident/participant voice in evaluation and program planning
- Promotes both short-term and long-term systemic change through organizing, advocacy, and/or leadership development

Greatest Needs

- Documents gaps between community need and resources
- Focuses on populations with limited access to resources
- Demonstrates financial need of populations served
- Emphasizes support to children and their families

Relationship with UWMB/ Campaign Support

- Conducts a high-quality UWMB campaign
- Participates actively in UWMB campaign services (tours, presentations, Community Care Day)
- Supports UWMB with stationery logos, agency signs, newsletter/ media endorsements
- Provides other support to UWMB, e.g., campaign-leadership involvement, new UWMB account development, UWMB public-relations participation

Collaboration and Integration of Services

- Links with other community groups through collaboratives, coalitions, joint programming, etc.
- Addresses multiple-issue areas in a coordinated way

Volunteer Involvement

- Involves volunteers appropriately and leverages their cost-effectiveness
- Seeks volunteer involvement as a community-building strategy

Relative Financial Need/Impact

- Demonstrates financial need and inability to access other resources
- UWMB funds can have significant financial impact, given funds available

Exhibit 2 (continued)

United Way of Massachusetts Bay Faith In Action Funding Criteria

DEVELOPMENT

- Program content includes emphasis on spiritual development
- Program content includes emphasis on constructive behavior, positive thinking, personal self development, and civic responsibility
- Program content contributes to individual development and maturity.

OUTREACH

- Emphasis on engaging and involving youth outside the membership of the congregation or faith membership
- Program content promotes respect for and appreciation of other religions and respect for diversity

MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

- Demonstrates effective/efficient human resource and financial management
- Has strong and diverse leadership
- Demonstrates vision

OUTCOMES

- Clearly delineates proposed outcomes
- Demonstrates how desired outcomes are related to program goals
- Ensures resident/participant voice in development of program planning
- Has developed tools to measure outcomes for participants
- Demonstrates significant benefits for individuals or in the overall life of the community

SOURCES OF FUNDING

- Institution demonstrates financial need and appropriately seeks other resources (i.e., diversified funding base)
- Request is less than 50% of current program budget
- Institution has reasonable plan for continuance of program in absence of ongoing UWMB funding

Exhibit 2 (continued)

CAPACITY BUILDING

- Institution serves as a family focused neighborhood resource with demonstrated support from the community
- Focuses on self-sufficiency and helping individuals help themselves; uses peer support and self-help models
- Values the diversity of the community and promotes inclusiveness
- Builds leadership among community residents
- Involves resident/participants in decision making and prioritizing
- Seeks opportunities to promote both short-term and long-term systemic change

COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION OF SERVICES

- Partners with other community groups through joint programming, coalition, collaborative, etc.
- Coordinates services within the institution to address participant needs and to manage resources.

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

- Volunteerism is an integral part of how the agency meets its mission
- Involves volunteers appropriately and leverages their cost-effectiveness
- Views volunteer involvement as a community building strategy and actively seeks volunteers reflective of the community served
- Encourages leadership development of volunteers and offers opportunities for growth.

GREATEST NEEDS

- Documents gaps between community need and resources
- Focuses on populations with limited access to resources
- Demonstrates financial need of populations served

For further information, please contact:

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Community Investments Division
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**Exhibit 3
Standard UWMB Funding Criteria**

Faith in Action Year One (1997-97) and Year Two (1998-99) Grant Activity

Name of Organization	Contact Person	Date FIA Grant Awarded	FIA Grant Amount	Proposed Use for FIA Grant	Activity in Date with FIA Funding (including # of participants)
God's Peace	Richard Williamson, Executive Director	April, 1998	\$30,000	To provide general operating support for the Residential Center programming for 8 men to receive training in business concepts and computer applications (Projected Budget for the Center = \$113,000)	Purchased residential facility and involving 6 to 8 men in residential program with counseling, spiritual development, job training and skill building components.
The Paraclete Center	Staler Ann Fox, Director	December, 1997	\$25,000	To provide general operating support for the organization to provide programming that nurtures spiritual development of young people with the suggestion that it further build its community board. (# of youth involved?)	Used the funding for personnel expenses so that additional funding could support the purchasing of supplies, computers, and furniture. Have involved spiritual components (prayer) into the evening study program. Working hard to involve families in the programming.
Bruce Wall Ministries	Karin Wall, Executive Director	April, 1998	\$30,000	To provide support for Project 21 and Ozona Academy--(1) an after school tutorial, vocational, social and spiritual support program for 20-25 youth, and (2) a summer day camp and job internship program for 75 youth.	Assisted with the collaboration of Eastern Nazarene College to hold the summer camp there; continues to help support Project 21 involve 45 youth up to the 10 th grade; and, provides stipends for community members with expertise in technical areas who assist in after-school program.
Straight Ahead Ministries	Scott Larson, Ch-Executive Director	April, 1998	\$30,000	To establish an urban based aftercare program focused on juvenile offenders in Dorchester, MA for 90 youth.	Hired a Latino woman from Dorchester to be the Boston area coordinator to start January 1, 1999. Three of the five sites are opening (Dorchester, Chelsea and Somerville). The organization will apply for further FIA funding to support the opening of sites in Lynn, Roxbury, and Mattapan.
Greater Boston	Kevin Greene, Faith-Based Mentoring Network Program Coordinator	June, 1998	\$30,000	To support the hiring of a program coordinator for the Faith-Based Mentoring Network (FBMN).	In August 1998, I hired a program coordinator who has attended several trainings on faith-based mentoring models and provided one church with training for 14 mentors.

(continued on back)

Exhibit 3 (continued)

Name of Organization	Contact Person	Date FIA Grant Awarded	FIA Grant Amount	Proposed Use for FIA Grant	Activity to Date with FIA Funding (including # of participants)
Boston Justice Ministries	Anne Marie Hunter, Executive Director	June, 1998	\$20,000 (\$10,000 released in June, 1998 \$10,000 to be released in January, 1999)	To support the Safe Havens program, which works with clergy and lay people to educate them on issues of family violence and provide training around appropriate prevention and intervention strategies.	As of January, 1999, the Safe Havens project involves 7 urban churches and 4 suburban churches. The clergy and lay people from each church have attended two of the four trainings and two churches have received technical assistance around training implementation. Organization submitted completed evaluation plan as of 12/31/98.
Boston Urban Youth Foundation	Carris Troy, Executive Director	June, 1998	\$30,000	To support the development of Operating Doors Trauma Intervention program in Boston public schools.	Hired a coordinator and two case managers. Working in three schools--Madison Park H.S., Lewis School and Martin Luther King School. 150 youth are involved.
City Mission Society - Boston Youth Organizing Project	Douglas Mitchell, President (Liz Steinhauser, Organizer)	October, 1998	\$20,000	To support the development of the Boston Youth Organizing Project	Supported a youth organizer who facilitated the youth participation for the GBIO Focusing Assembly. One of the BYOP youth was one of three co-chairs to plan the event and two other youth leaders gave testimonials at the event. 465 youth attended the meeting of 4,000 people.
St. Augustine Ministries	Richard Harris, Executive Director and President	October, 1998	\$15,000	For general operating support for the After School Program and summer camp for low-income boys.	Continuing to run the after-school program. Hired a staff member with FIA grant and are involving 20 kids. In mid-January, camper registration and camp staff hiring begins.
Greater Boston Interfaith Organization	Lew Fifer, Lead Organizer	December, 1998	\$15,000	For general operating support.	n/a

Exhibit 4²⁵

Appendix A

FAITH IN ACTION EVALUATION ROUNDTABLE: PARTICIPANTS

Moderators

Mary Jo Bane, Professor of Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Mary Jo conducts research on poverty and welfare and infrastructure. Her interest in this field began in her work in government at the state level in New York State and at the federal level for the Clinton Administration. She is currently a Fellow at the Harvard Divinity School.

Chris Winship, Chair and Professor in Sociology Department at Harvard. He is also Chair of the Jewish Community Relations Council Social Justice Committee.

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Carole Thompson, Senior Associate, Annie E. Casey Foundation. Carole is responsible for the Foundation's research on how faith can support community building.

Tom Kelley, Senior Research Assistant, Annie E. Casey Foundation. Tom works in the evaluation group that supports both Foundation initiatives as well as evaluation models and practices.

Roundtable Participants

Jeff Bass is Executive Director of the Emmanuel Gospel Center, an agency that provides training and support to churches. This organization receives funding from United Way's Faith in Action Initiative.

Alyia Branch is founder of Branch Associates, a research and evaluation organization which has worked with many faith based programs.

Mark Chaves, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology at the University of Arizona. Mark recently completed the "National Congregation Study," a survey of religious congregations in the United States, including data on congregations' social service activities and collaborative relationships with other community organizations.

Richard Freeman, Professor of Economics at Harvard University, has studied problems of inner city black youth, including people in prisons, and the effect of religious involvement.

Rev. Dr. Gloria White-Hammond, co-pastor of the Bethel A.M.E. church and co-chair of the Faith in Action Initiative.

Sylvia Johnson, Associate Director of the Hyams Foundation in Boston. Sylvia is a member of the Faith in Action Committee and developed the The Black Church Capacity Building Project at Hyams.

George Thompson, Inter-Denominational Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. George was previously at the Chicago Theological Seminary providing training resources for church leaders. He has also participated in a demonstration project that was working with an alliance of churches to provide resources to help young people.

²⁵ Source: "Evaluating Faith in Action: An Initiative of the United Way of Massachusetts Bay," report of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, October 1999.

Exhibit 4 (continued)

Anna Madison, Professor, Human Services Graduate Program, College of Public and Community Service, *University of Massachusetts, Boston*. *Anna has extensive experience with evaluations of youth programs. She has worked with youth and the arts and is currently working with sustainable agriculture and youth.*

Lewis Rudolph, Senior Director, Community Building, United Way of America. Lew has worked in community building for over 30 years. His work with faith based organizations began in Mississippi during the civil rights movement in 1967, and in Detroit with Focus Hope, a civil rights organization providing support for economic development.

Rev. Harold Dean Trulear, Vice President, Director of Church Collaboration Initiatives, Private Public Ventures. Dean was trained as a sociologist of religion and has served as Dean of New York Theological Seminary. *He is currently operating two faith-based projects. One is a demonstration project that is modeled loosely on the Ten Point Coalition in Boston, and is looking at the role that faith-based institutions play in the reduction of juvenile violence and juvenile crime. The other is working with the Pew Charitable Trust to document the capacity for community service of seven faith-based organizations in Philadelphia over the next ten years.*

Karen Wall is co-founder of Bruce Wall Ministries, an eleven year-old organization of the Dorchester Temple Baptist Church in Boston that receives funding from the Faith in Action Initiative. Their primary focus is to help the spiritual, academic, and social development of young people, children, and families.

United Way of Massachusetts Bay Staff:

Sarah Alvord, Senior Director of Community Investments, staff for Faith in Action Committee.

Pat Brandes, Chief Operating Officer, United Way of Massachusetts Bay.

Don Buchholz, Senior Director of Community Investments, staff for United Way's Outcomes Measurement Initiative.

Marilyn Anderson Chase, Senior Vice President of Community Investments, has oversight responsibility for all of the programs at United Way which invest resources in the community, including the Faith in Action Initiative.

Recorder:

Cynthia Hargrove, trainer and consultant to non-profit organizations, is former Senior Director of Marketing Programs and Training at United Way.