Coffee & Quality 2025 Fellows Program
Bolstering nonprofit organization's data and evaluation practices

Purpose

As an extension of Coffee & Quality, the Fellows Program is an opportunity for United Way of Greater Houston to deepen and strengthen capacity building for organizations to bolster and sustain their data, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement (CQI) practices.

The Fellows Program is designed as a community of practice focused on supporting and strengthening the existing conditions for data and evaluation practices (infrastructure) of nonprofit organizations. Specifically:

- The ability to use data and findings from evaluation to inform decisions and improve programmatic impact.
- Promote sustainable practices in data and evaluation to safeguard business continuity and preserve institutional knowledge staff attrition.

The Fellows Program will be comprised of a small group of organizations (10-12) with two representatives from each organization that will meet for the initial program over three months then meet quarterly to solidify practices.

Objectives

Organizational Objectives: Organizations will strengthen their processes and systems to measure their impact through sustained data and evaluation practices.

Individual Objectives: Participants will build their data and evaluation skills to strengthen their abilities. (knowledge and application)

Topics

The topics covered during the Fellows Program will aim to bolster a solid foundation of data, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement to ensure sustainability of practices. Topics include:
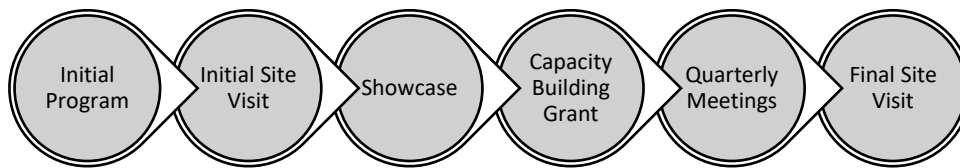
1. **Assessing organizational data and evaluation maturity:** Exploring data literacy, CQI culture, and equitable data and evaluation infrastructures to understand current strengths and opportunities.
2. **Inventory and quality improvement within nonprofit organizations:** Ensuring the sustainability and meaningful use of data.
3. **Enhancement of existing practices:** Identifying and building upon both soft and hard infrastructures that support data use.
4. **Foundational elements for sustainable data collection:** Focusing on the people, processes, and tools that support effective data strategies, including:
   - Clear strategies for collecting and using data
   - Development and use of logic models
   - A defined evaluation and CQI plan
5. **Documenting and strengthening data practices:** Supporting the creation and use of:
   - A data dictionary (codebook)
   - Documentation on procedures for analysis
   - Measurements of outputs, outcomes, and targets
6. **Streamlining and demystifying reporting:** Identifying opportunities to reduce burden and improve the efficiency of reporting processes.
7. **Using data for learning and improvement:** Distinguishing between data analysis and interpretation and promoting the use of visualizations of results to communicate value and drive decision-making.
8. **Sustainability strategies:** Embedding practices that support long-term use and integration of data and evaluation for continuous learning and impact.

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UNITED WAY
Greater Houston

Participation & Time Commitment

Initial Program → Initial Site Visit → Showcase → Capacity Building Grant → Quarterly Meetings → Final Site Visit

1. Each organization selected will identify two staff members that will participate in the program. Participants must commit to attending all sessions. If more than one session is missed by both participants, the organization will be invited to join the next cycle of the Fellows Program.
2. The initial program consists of eight, 2-hour in-person sessions with a medley of learning experiences (presentations, open discussion, article reviews, coaching, technical guidance.)
3. Check-in with facilitator(s) on progress toward establishment and/or enhancements of data and evaluation practices through one-on-one sessions and initial site visits to organization during the initial program period.
4. Showcase ceremony with United Way staff, agency leadership, funders, and supporters of Coffee & Quality. Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer of participating organizations and staff members participating in the program are required to attend.
5. After the initial program concludes, there will be quarterly group gatherings and final site visits in 2026 to further support sustainability strategies for data practices.

Initial Program Schedule
All sessions held at United Way of Greater Houston (50 Waugh Drive, Houston, Texas 77007) from 9am – 11am.

August 2025	September 2025	October 2025
• Friday, August 22 • Friday, August 29	• Friday, September 12 • Friday, September 19 • Friday, September 26	• Thursday, October 2 • Friday, October 10 • Thursday, October 23 as showcase ceremony

* Site visits scheduled during September & October 2025

Capacity Building Grant (stipend)
Each organization selected to participate in the Fellows Program will receive a small stipend (up to $10,000) to support the sustainability and growth of their data and evaluation capacity. This stipend is designed to strengthen both the hard and soft infrastructures that underpin effective data practices. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Soft Infrastructure – Education, Culture, and Innovation Supports**
  A portion of the stipend may be used to invest in people, practices, and innovation that strengthen your organization's data culture. This includes:
  - Continued education and training opportunities such as workshops, conferences, or specialized courses.
  - Team learning activities, internal data discussions, or coaching to deepen evaluation mindset and data literacy.
  - Research and development efforts aimed at exploring new applications, testing ideas, or collaborating to improve your data strategies and use.

- **Hard Infrastructure – Systems, Tools, and Technology**
  Stipends can be used to maintain or upgrade the technical tools that support your data work. These investments ensure your organization has a solid technical foundation for data collection, management, and use. This may include:
  - Renewing software licenses or subscriptions
  - Purchasing or upgrading data platforms, dashboards, or CRMs
  - Hiring technical support or developers to enhance existing systems
- **Other Uses – Organization-Specific Needs**
  We recognize that organizations are at different stages in their data journey. If you have a proposed use of the stipend that is not listed above but contributes to the sustainability and development of your data practices, we are happy to discuss and consider it.

To Apply

All interested organizations are invited to apply to participate in the Fellows Program.
Interested organizations should submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) from their Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director to **Learning@unitedwayhouston.org** by **Thursday, July 17, 2025.**

The letter should be two pages at maximum. Letters should include responses to the questions provided below. These questions are intended to gauge an understanding of your personal experience and the organization as a whole:

- What the organization hopes to gain from the Fellows Program experience.
- Identify three areas you want to improve as an organization related to your data and evaluation practices. *See FAQ section for list of data practices.*
- What question(s) are you trying to answer with your data?
- Explain how leadership (including executive leadership and Board) supports the use of data and evaluation (buy-in), and the organization's experience with using data to continuously learn and grow.
- Identify the two staff members that would participate in the program.

Organizations may submit an optional Letter of Support from their Board Chair. Please submit your LOI to **Learning@unitedwayhouston.org** and complete the online interest form **here.** As space is limited, 10-12 organizations will be selected based on quality of application and support from their leadership.

Submission

1. Submit Letter of Interest (LOI), optional Letter of Support to Learning@unitedwayhouston.org
2. Complete online interest form by clicking here.

Timeline and Key Dates

Thursday, June 12, 2025	**LOI and Online Interest Form Release**
Thursday, July 17, 2025	**LOI and Online Interest Form Due**
Monday, August 4, 2025	**Decision Notifications**
Friday, August 22, 2025	**Fellows Program Begins** (Initial Program)
September & October, 2025	Initial Program Site Visits
Thursday, October 23, 2025	**Fellows Program Showcase Ceremony**

*See Participation & Time Commitment section for full Fellows Program information on the schedule beyond the initial program

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What nonprofits are eligible to apply? Any nonprofit organization is eligible if they are defined as a 501(c)(3) designation by the Internal Revenue Code. They must be located within the surrounding greater Houston area (Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Montgomery, Waller Counties)

What are data practices? There are seven data practices that United Way of Greater Houston has identified that are essential to bolstering the utilization of data and evaluation within an organization.

1. Strategies for collecting and using data
2. Logic models
3. An evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan
4. A data dictionary (i.e. codebook)
5. Documentation on procedures for analysis and reporting
6. Measurements of outputs, outcomes, and targets
7. Visualizations of results from data analysis to communicate value

More Questions

Please direct all questions to Jessica Davison at jdavison@unitedwayhouston.org

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Fellows Program Interest Form

In the interest form, we will ask several Likert scale questions about your organization. If you would like to preview the questions before you open the interest form, they can be viewed below.

1. How did you hear about the Coffee & Quality Fellows Program?
   - The Brown Foundation
   - Collective Action for Youth
   - Community Bridges
   - Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF)
   - Houston Endowment Inc.
   - LinkedIn Post
   - Rice University – The Center for Philanthropy & Nonprofit Leadership
   - United Way – General
   - United Way – Nonprofit Connection
   - United Way – Out2Learn
   - Other: _____
2. Agency Name: _____
3. CEO First and Last Name: _____
4. CEO Email Address: _____
5. What is your annual operating budget?
   - $0 - $250,000
   - $250,001 - $500,000
   - $500,001 - $750,000
   - $750,001 - $1,000,000
   - $1,000,001-$3,000,000
   - $3,000,001 - $5,000,000
   - $5,000,001 - $7,000,000
   - $7,000,001 - $10,000,000
   - $10,000,001 - $100,000,000+
6. Primary Contact First and Last Name: _____
7. Primary Contact Email Address: _____
8. Is the primary contact one of the participating staff?
   - Yes
   - No

9. If yes to #8, Second Participant Information role or title: _____
10. Second Contact First and Last Name: _____
11. Second Contact Email Address: _____

10. If no to #8, First Participant Information role or title: _____
11. First Contact First and Last Name: _____
12. First Contact Email Address: _____
13. Second Participant Information role or title: _____
14. Second Contact First and Last Name: _____
15. Second Contact Email Address: _____

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How frequently are these data practices consistently applied across all of your organization's program offerings on a monthly basis? On scale of Never, Rarely, Often, Always, N/A

- Strategies for collecting and using data
- Logic Models
- An evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan
- A data dictionary (i.e., Codebook)
- Documentation on procedures for analysis
- Measurements of outputs, outcomes, and targets
- Visualizations of results from data analysis to communicate value

How confident are you/would you be in personally helping your organization develop the following? On scale of Not at all confident, A little confident, Confident, Very confident, N/A

- Strategies for collecting and using data
- Logic Models
- An evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan
- A data dictionary (i.e., Codebook)
- Documentation on procedures for analysis
- Measurements of outputs, outcomes, and targets
- Visualizations of results from data analysis to communicate value

Please rate the following criteria based on your perception of your organization's ability in each area as it pertains to your data practices. On scale of 1 to 4 with 1 = very limited ability in this area, 4 = strong ability in this area (scale includes N/A)

- Leadership buy-in and support for using data and evaluation
- Resources including staff that are allocated and/or committed to data and evaluation practices
- Commitment to continuously learning and growing as an organization
- Established data and evaluation practices