What is the Mission Impact Framework?

The Mission Impact Framework is a model and system that will allow the YWCA collective or network to coordinate mission impact work and also acknowledge that each YWCA local association responds to the unique needs of their respective community. Additionally, the framework optimizes the YWCA's competitive advantage as an organization providing systemic advocacy and with a local presence across the nation.

The YWCA USA has three signature platforms that support the YWCA mission: YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. The signature platforms are focus areas of the YWCA's collective mission impact work, including services and programs, as well as advocacy and public policy.

In each signature platform, signature outcomes or metrics will focus our work, as a collective and with the intent to move the needle over a period of years. Additionally, the focused nature of a multi-year signature outcome in each platform area will allow the YWCA's advocacy efforts added focus and further align all mission impact efforts.

Special events, campaigns, and initiatives may support a signature platform and/or outcome goal. These signature events and campaigns will be identified over time and current signature events, such as Stand Against Racism and Week Without Violence, will continue.

YWCA Mission Impact Groups are an important part of the framework and engage YWCA leaders around mission-focused initiatives or projects in order to increase operational and/or mission capacity. Mission impact groups are strategic in nature and allow for the entire YWCA network to participate in the planning and implementation of goals in signature platform areas.

YWCA USA will identify best practice programs that have activities and outcomes in alignment with a signature metric that are replicable, scalable, and can be offered to all YWCAs as a program option. These model programs will be evidence-based and may be identified within the YWCA network or outside of our network, or a new program that is developed with funding. Local associations will not be required to implement any model program, however they will be available as needed by a local association, in order to achieve and report signature outcomes.
Why do we have a Mission Impact Framework?

In 2012, the member associations of the YWCA consented to a restructure of the YWCA after a multi-year assessment of the YWCA organization, called the Strong Foundation. Fearless Future. Initiative. By way of the consent to centralize, the organization sought to strengthen the entire YWCA network, locally and nationally. One of the identified opportunities was in the area of mission impact, specifically, the need for a mission impact system, including strategic planning, shared metrics, tracking of outcomes, and an ability to report data reflecting the collective impact of the YWCA both internally and externally. In summary, a major benefit of centralizing the organization was to work in unity toward mission realization and demonstration of collective impact.

Additionally, the framework will enable us to measure and speak to the achievements of the YWCA as a collective movement, to funders, donors, peer organizations, legislators, etc.

What is a Theory of Change?

A Theory of Change is a method to analyze, plan, execute, and evaluate work toward an identified change or mission. The Theory of Change also identifies the preconditions necessary to do that work. It is a best practice for nonprofit organizations to have a theory of change.

Why do we have a Theory of Change?

As we pursue our mission work, the YWCA Theory of Change informs the development and implementation of the Mission Impact Framework. The YWCA Theory of Change was influenced by the history of the YWCA, and the practices and principles that guide our work as a network in the 21st Century. The YWCA theory of change is comprised of three components: 1) five foundational assumptions, 2) our method or continuum of response to social issues, and 3) our three signature platforms, identified in the Mission Impact Framework.

The five foundational assumptions are the basic assumptions that inform the philosophy, work, style and structure of the YWCA. Our continuum of response to effect lasting change states that the YWCA is committed to addressing the needs of women and girls via direct-services in tandem with strategies of community issue education and public policy advocacy. We focus our work in our three signature platform areas.

How were the Mission Impact Framework and Theory of Change developed?

Both the framework and theory of change were developed by the national team and vetted repeatedly with internal stakeholder groups, such as the CEO Advisory Council, and external, third party experts. Both of the tools were informed by the history of the YWCA, the findings of the Strong Foundation. Fearless Future. Initiative, the current nonprofit social justice environment, 2013 biannual profile survey data from local associations, peer organization input, and more.
**How does the Mission Impact Framework affect YWCA USA Membership Compliance?**

Current association compliance standards in the area of mission will be adapted and updated based on the Mission Impact Framework. The implementation of any new compliance standards will occur in phases.

The undergirding principle of the framework is that local associations continue to meet the unique needs of their community, but also work together as a network or collective, to realize specific outcomes in our three signature platform areas of mission impact. The framework allows a local association to achieve or comply with signature outcomes by way of direct service programming, public policy advocacy, and issue education.

**Will each local association be required to provide programming, education, and public policy advocacy in each of the three signature platform areas?**

We have not yet determined the exact requirements for compliance related to direct service programming, public policy advocacy, and issue education to achieve each signature outcome. However, every local association will be required to do work in all three signature platform areas. There will be a phased approach, and consideration of expense and budget implications.

An important premise of the mission impact framework is that it will allow the YWCA network to clearly, definitively, and legitimately track and report on our collective mission impact in key signature areas. In order to realize that premise, local associations will be required to do work in the signature platform areas, in one of three ways: 1) Continuing a program that is in alignment, 2) Aligning or adapting a current program, and/or 3) beginning a new program.

**Will the YWCA USA be providing financial information related to the implementation of the framework, for example the signature campaigns, so that local associations can consider budget implications as part of the annual budgeting process?**

Budget and expense information will be included as part of any signature event or model program. The YWCA USA is keenly aware of the needs of local associations in terms of planning for and implementing any needed programming, events, public policy advocacy, education efforts, etc. in order to support the mission impact framework. Implementation and compliance will occur in stages, and will take into account the typical business cycle of a local association.

**Will the Mission Impact Framework replace the Hallmark Program model?**

The Hallmark program model has not been used or enforced since the YWCA restructured in January of 2013, although it is mentioned in the YWCA USA Bylaws. The framework gives us a new model and language to guide us in relation to mission impact, and replaces the former Hallmark program model.

**Will a model program be created to address women’s economic advancement?**

Model programs will be identified for each signature outcome, in each signature platform area. It is the priority of the YWCA USA to identify model programs that are
evidence based, replicable, scalable, and reasonably affordable (human resources and other expenses) to implement.

When will the selected signature outcomes be shared with the entire YWCA network? What opportunities will YWCA member associations have to provide input on the chosen signature outcomes?

To date, the proposed signature outcomes have been vetted by the YWCA USA staff team, the CEO Advisory Council, and external, third parties. At the YWCA Leadership and Capacity Building Institute in February 2015, the signature outcomes will be shared and the attendees will serve as a cohort to provide additional input for consideration.

In the spring of 2015, the Mission Impact Framework, including the identified signature outcomes will be shared with the entire YWCA network. Input from the network will be considered prior to pursuing the final stage of implementation.

How can an association recommend one of their programs to be considered as a YWCA model program?

YWCA member associations will be formally invited to submit a program, event or other initiative as a model program. The invitation will come by way of an email announcement to the executive director/chief executive officer of each YWCA association.

Will the YWCA choose a program developed by another organization to be a model program?

The YWCA USA will consider both YWCA and external programs for selection as a model program. We will consider a number of factors and implications prior to endorsing a program as a model program, such as the demonstrated outcomes of the program, the scalability and replicability, and the expense budget.

Will the YWCA USA Bylaws have to be changed?

There is nothing in the Mission Impact Framework that requires changes to be made to the current bylaws, except to remove the “Hallmark” terminology in Section III.A.4.b. The framework gives us a new model and language to guide us in relation to mission impact, and replaces the former Hallmark program model.

In an attempt to achieve the mission and bring clarity to the brand, it seems that many local associations have continued adding programs. Rather than bringing clarity, it has done the opposite. What are the plans of the YWCA USA to help local associations evaluate their current services and become more focused? Are assessment tools being developed?

The YWCA USA hopes that local associations will use the mission impact framework as a tool when considering programming in their community that will help bring focus and create a mission impact system for their local work. The framework, when used as part of a strategic planning process, will help focus the efforts and resources of the association. The framework, as a tool, will be integrated into the YWCA USA member services strategic planning and capacity building initiatives. The team of Directors of
Member Services, as part of a phased implementation, will consider program assessment tools to complement mission impact evaluation and planning. Currently, there are program planning and evaluation tools available in the YWCA USA Resource Library, located on the YWCA intranet.