

Shared Gold: A Plan for Engagement, Responsibility, and Prosperity

Western Michigan University Civic Action Plan



Vision: Our Bond of Shared Gold

To affirm and advance Western Michigan University’s public purpose as a learner-centered, discovery-driven, and globally-engaged institution, *Shared Gold* outlines bold steps by which connections, partnerships, and reciprocal relationships between Western Michigan University and community stakeholders might be forged, strengthened, and enriched. Targeting engagement, responsibility, and prosperity, this plan encourages Western Michigan University to build community health, wealth, education, and culture through action coordinated by newly created collective impact networks. Our collective action and its potential impact is our shared *goal* as well as our shared *gold*—a rich bond uniting Western Michigan University with an expansive range of organizations and individuals in our community.

Anchoring Our Bond

The collective impact networks that will result from this civic action plan will be anchored by Western Michigan University. Western Michigan University is a learner-centered, research university that has attained a Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation and that builds intellectual inquiry and discovery into undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in a way that fosters knowledge and innovation, and transforms wisdom into action. As a public university, Western Michigan University provides leadership in teaching, research, learning, and service, and is committed to enhancing the future of our global citizenry through community outreach and engaged scholarship.



Western Michigan University recently unveiled an updated strategic plan, *The Gold Standard 2020*, which embodies its commitment to accountable and responsible behavior within an ethical, compassionate, diverse, and respectful environment. This strategic plan also works to ensure that Western Michigan University will provide opportunity for a diverse and globally representative community of learners and also leverage discovery and innovation to enhance the economic vitality of communities; thereby, making the world a better and more hospitable place. In particular, a number of objectives nested under *The Gold Standard 2020*’s third goal address civic engagement, in the form of Western Michigan University mobilizing its assets to “create mutually beneficial partnerships that impact significant scientific, economic, and social problems” as well as cultivating “outreach [that] is attentive to local and world needs.”

Stating Our Goal

In conjunction with our mission, vision, strategic plan, and our renewed commitment to Campus Compact, Western Michigan University will create and sustain intentional high impact collective networks—composed of community partners, students, faculty and staff, and additional constituent groups—that foster civic engagement, social responsibility, and shared prosperity in the Kalamazoo area and beyond through location, articulation, empowerment, and celebration.

Location

Locating our networks;

Articulation

Articulating our shared agendas;

Empowerment

Empowering members of our networks to positively impact our community; and,

Celebration

Celebrating members of our networks for their sustained commitment to civic engagement, social responsibility, and shared prosperity.

Approach: Our Collective Action

The many connections, partnerships, and reciprocal relationships that Western Michigan University currently shares with community organizations and individual stakeholders are strong. Most all of the relationships, partnerships, and connections that Western Michigan University currently enjoys can be considered meaningful; however, these

relationships do not amount to collective impact networks. Western Michigan University intends to step forward as an anchoring organization to better support and coordinate collective impact networks in the Kalamazoo area and beyond. Not only does this *Shared Gold* action plan state our intent to better serve as an anchor institution in these collective impact networks, but this plan also proposes four objectives around which four main categories of network members—community partners, Western Michigan University students, Western Michigan University faculty and staff, and additional constituent groups—might better coordinate their actions for increased scalability of impact.



Location

Goal 1: Locating Our Networks

Networks are proximal, in that they depend upon the location of one network member to other network members. The collective impact networks that Western Michigan University will anchor must be located in proximity to their members and their stakeholders. Western Michigan University will work to locate initiatives across institutional, physical, digital, and interpersonal spaces.

Objective 1.1. To locate our networks in **institutional space**, Western Michigan University will restructure its community engagement efforts so that the Office of Community Outreach provides a single point of contact to the community.

Objective 1.2. To locate our networks in **physical space**, Western Michigan University will secure, where appropriate, shared space in the university and partnering communities.

Objective 1.3. To locate our networks in **digital space**, Western Michigan University will develop its website for community engagement, so that it functions as a usable tool for community stakeholders. Western Michigan University's Office of Community Outreach will increase the multimedia reach, functionality, and usability of the "Community Outreach" website so that it serves as a digital hub for all members of all networks.

Objective 1.4. To locate our collective networks in **interpersonal space**, Western Michigan University will recruit new stakeholder units using an equity perspective aimed at recognizing the value of and building trust among all members.

Articulation

Goal 2: Articulating Our Shared Agendas

The collective impact networks that Western Michigan University will anchor must be capable of moving toward the needs and agendas of network members. With the guidance of Western Michigan University, members of our networks will articulate shared agendas using an iterative process that identifies needs, encourages collaboration, and develops multidirectional benefits.

Objective 2.1. To articulate our shared agendas so as to **address acute needs**, Western Michigan University will conduct assessments that identify the most pressing needs among members.

Objective 2.2. To articulate our shared agendas so as to **coordinate action among network members**, Western Michigan University will establish additional high impact collective networks for the documented needs.

Objective 2.3. To articulate our shared agendas so as to **promote multidirectional benefits**, Western Michigan University will draft at least one memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will detail the shared expectations among members affiliated with each additional network that emerges from objective 2.2.

Empowerment

Goal 3: Empowering Members of Our Networks to Positively Impact Our Community

Networks possess potential, in that the combined and coordinated work of membership is more potent than the mere sum of each member's work. The collective impact networks that Western Michigan University will anchor must tap into and actualize the collective potential of its membership. With guidance from Western Michigan University, our networks will empower members to positively impact the community.

Objective 3.1 To empower members to act in a way that **maximizes responsible action**, Western Michigan University will facilitate semi-annual professional development sessions for members, including student members, faculty members, and staff members.

Objective 3.2. To empower members to act in a way that **capitalizes upon existing institutional assets**, Western Michigan University will leverage our academic expertise and relationships with the Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine and the Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School, and the various civically engaged Western Michigan University institutes and centers to positively impact the health, wealth, education, and culture of our community.

Objective 3.3. To empower members to act in a way that **builds community capacity**, Western Michigan University will establish a 2018 baseline for community engagement as identified in *The Gold Standard 2020* and work to increase participation over the next two years.

Objective 3.4. To empower members to act in a way that **seeds cutting-edge ideas**, Western Michigan University will participate in development activities and grantsmanship to provide financial assistance to support small seed grants and microloans to members of our networks.

Celebration

Goal 4: Celebrating Members of Our Networks for Sustained Commitment to Civic Engagement, Social Responsibility, and Shared Prosperity

Networks are responsive. Motivating an engaged and ethical response from membership is one way to sustain the future collective impact of our networks. The collective impact networks that Western Michigan University will anchor must, therefore, commend notable member commitment. With the help of Western Michigan University, our networks will encourage member commitment by celebrating members' dedication with awards, designations, and additional resources.

Objective 4.1. To celebrate the sustained commitment of members, Western Michigan University will **establish annual community engagement awards**—one each for a deserving community partner, student, faculty, staff, alumni, and constituent group.

Objective 4.2. Western Michigan University will work to **establish a Civic Engagement pathway** in the new WMU Signature program's transcript and diploma notation feature to recognize students' civic engagement efforts.

Objective 4.3. To celebrate faculty members for their sustained commitment to our networks, Western Michigan University will **consider the ways in which current policies might better recognize civic engagement** as a distinctive type of service and as comparable to research and teaching.

Outcomes: Our Collective Outputs

The collective impact networks that Western Michigan University intends to anchor must gauge their influence and assess their effects. With direction from Western Michigan University, our networks will measure their impact on our community by applying the metrics of completion rates, satisfaction levels, percentage change, and additional community-driven metrics to their outcomes and outputs. Specific implementation metrics and exact measures of success will be posted to Western Michigan University's Office of Community Outreach's website:

<http://www.wmich.edu/community/>.

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