The FrameWorks Institute is an independent nonprofit research organization founded in 1999 to advance the nonprofit sector’s communications capacity by identifying, translating and modeling relevant scholarly research for framing the public discourse about social problems. FrameWorks designs, commissions, manages and publishes multi-method, multi-disciplinary communications research to prepare nonprofit organizations to expand their constituency base, to build public will, and to further public understanding of specific social issues.

Measuring Our Imprint on the Nonprofit Sector:
FrameWorks Institute 2011 Field Report

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The FrameWorks Institute maintains an active program of communications research, curriculum development, teaching, and technical assistance to nonprofits that is supported by its on-line tools and interactive media. In the calendar year 2011, the FrameWorks Institute was awarded more than $3.1 million to support these activities through the work of the Institute’s 16 full-time staff including 10 Ph.D.’s in various social science disciplines, 2 MPHs, 1 MSW, 3 media producers and 2 support staff. In this evaluation report, we provide data summarizing key facets of the Institute’s work in 2011 in a way that outlines the shape of our imprint on the nonprofit sector this year.

**The Theory of Social Change**
The FrameWorks Institute’s mandate is to understand the long-term evolution of social issues, how those issues play out in the public discourse, and how they can be fundamentally recast over time. Our theory of social change rests on the notion that more effective storytelling about the social problems we face as a nation, consistently and over time, can serve to broaden public discourse and create an opening for alternative policy, programmatic, and population-based outcomes to emerge.

Recognizing that there may be many different ways of operationalizing this theory, we have chosen to focus on the thought leaders in the nonprofit sector, putting empirically based reframing tools in their hands, and showing them how to effectively use these tools in their everyday communications practices. This is why the Institute has invested substantial resources in developing a diverse suite of interpretive, multi-media applications and products to help teach and advance broad understanding of the science that undergirds our work.

![FrameWorks Impact Logic Model](image)

Figure 1. FrameWorks Impact Logic Model

The logic model (underscoring the relationship between the components of our work and the impacts we aspire to generate over the long-term) drive the activities supported by the
The FrameWorks Institute sustains an active research agenda and now has a portfolio of more than 26 issue areas on which we have published research (see the “issues” page on the Institute’s website for more information). These issue areas span a broad range from human development issues like child and youth development, education, and health care to community development issues like climate change, public safety, environmental health, food systems, and rural development. The research also includes such crosscutting issues as Budgets and Taxes, which affect nonprofit organizations regardless of the specific foci of their work.

The Institute maintains a prolific research publications record with more than 124 research reports covering the full gamut of methods embedded in its Strategic Frame Analysis™ on its website as a resource for the nonprofit community. In 2011, with generous support from the Institute’s funders, the Institute continued to widen the scope and depth of the empirical research base that informs its communications recommendations. The Institute added more than 33 research reports to its portfolio during 2011. In addition, the Institute added four entirely new areas of research: sexual violence, public safety, addiction, and digital media and learning.

It is not just the quantity of research conducted by the Institute but the credibility of the research that we measure as part of our annual assessment. The quality and strength of the research is especially important not just because it forms the basis upon which our communications recommendations are made but also because (as we have found in our evaluation work), it bolsters the confidence that nonprofit leaders have in using the guidance we provide to them.

Although not the lone indicator of quality, one way to assess the strength of the research is by its acceptance in scholarly forums, publications, and conferences. FrameWorks researchers presented the Institute’s research at more than 10 academic conferences in 2011.

Selected FrameWorks Presentations at Academic Conferences

- American Psychological Association
- Annual Research and Policy Conference for Children’s Mental Health
- Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management
- National Forum on Early Childhood Program Evaluation
- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child

In addition, FrameWorks research was highlighted in two peer-reviewed journals this year.

These publications add to a growing list of publications featuring FrameWorks research in peer-reviewed journals (such as the 2009 volume dedicated exclusively to the Institute’s research and communications recommendations related to youth development issues).

- *New Directions in Youth Development*, no. 124, Winter 2009. (A twelve chapter volume written by FrameWorks researchers.)

In addition, the Institute added new theoretical white papers on two issues that are central to the research approach taken by the Institute – the development of reframing values and simplifying models (metaphors).


Finally, the FrameWorks Institute understands its role as part of a community of scholars doing empirical research in the cognitive and social sciences. As a result, the Institute frequently invites distinguished scholars from a variety of disciplines in the cognitive and social sciences to inform our work and perspective. In 2011, two distinguished scholars shared their scholarly work with our staff at one or more of our conferrals:

- Tom Weisner, Ph.D., Prof. of Anthropology, Departments of Psychiatry (NPI Semel Institute, Center for Culture and Health) and Anthropology at UCLA.
- Bradd Shore, Ph.D., Goodrich C. White Professor at Emory University and Director of MARIAL Center

In addition, we invited six graduate student interns in the digital media and learning field to share their work with our staff.

**THE LEARNING ENGAGEMENTS**
The FrameWorks Institute also maintains an active schedule of outreach activities meant to bring relevant FrameWorks research to the attention of nonprofit leaders. These engagements are also oriented to teach those leaders interested in building fluency in strategic framing principles to effectively use this research in their work and to understand the social science that undergirds the overall approach. These learning engagements usually take the form of spokesperson trainings, research briefings, extended work with communities of practice, workshops, and webinars.

Since its founding in 1999, the FrameWorks Institute has presented its communications approach to thousands of nonprofit leaders through these types of learning engagements. The most intensive work we do to teach about our research and approach to frame analysis happens in our six-month long Study Circles, which are essentially communities of practice that focus on particular issue areas. In these Study Circles, groups of 25 nonprofit leaders work together to learn and adapt a common language for framing their work. Participants are taught the elements of effective storytelling about social issues (including the significance of values, metaphors, context, messengers, social math, visual images, and more); to deconstruct the stories in media and public discourse about these issues; and how to take messages they might have used before and reconstruct them in more effective ways. In essence, they learn the art and science of effective storytelling about social issues.

Since 2007, we have conducted 20 of these Study Circles with more than 500 nonprofit leaders around the country in topical areas such as health care, child development, immigration, climate change and others. In 2011, the Institute led seven Study Circles in the issue areas of climate change, early child development, children’s oral health, and health care.

In addition to the time-intensive work of Study Circles, FrameWorks’ staff also led the following Learning Engagements in 2011 with nonprofit
leaders.

- Fifty-six workshops, trainings, and research briefings around the country;
- Thirty-five webinars or other virtual presentations of our research and applications; and
- Three spokesperson trainings in the following substantive areas: early child development (Canada and North Carolina); and climate change (Woods Hole, MA).

**INTERPRETIVE TOOLS, APPLICATIONS, AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA**

To ensure that the research conducted by the Institute is easy for nonprofit leaders to access and use, the Institute produces a wide range of interpretive materials, real-world applications of the research, and interactive media products that provide hands-on reframing experience.

- **Message Memos and Briefs** are distillations of the major research in each of our issue areas. Typically these interpretive materials summarize the research base, highlight particular traps in the current discourse, and outline the reframing recommendations that emerged from the data. These products are also important because they are typically written once an entire body of research has been completed and is made available. To date, there are 36 of these memos and briefs on our website across all of our issues – 4 of which were produced in the last year.

- **Multi-media** (such as eWorkshops and recorded webinars, and the like) products that distill the research and communications recommendations have become important teaching resources for the Institute. There are now 21 such products on the Institute’s website.

- The Institute also produces **toolkits** on specific topical areas of research. Toolkits generally include the entire range of research, applications, interpretive materials, and media that FrameWorks has produced on a given topic. So a nonprofit leader might find sample opinion editorials, trigger videos, summaries of the research in Message Memos or Briefs, frequently asked questions, and a whole range of other useful resources. The Institute has 16 such compilations of its work on our website in the form of toolkits – two of which were completed in 2011.

- Occasionally the Institute works with nonprofit leaders to develop creative materials for **issue campaigns**, policy or program initiatives. Past campaigns have included the Watch Your Mouth (oral health campaign) and the Domestic Toxins Campaign. In 2011, the Institute created a new campaign for a coalition of early child development advocates convened by United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley.

**ESTABLISHING A VIRTUAL PRESENCE**

In recent years, the importance of having a presence online and in social media sites has grown exponentially. Like most nonprofits, FrameWorks operates an active website – in fact almost all of our research, applications, and other materials live on our website as public facing documents. In 2011, we made strategic investments to increase our virtual presence and to share our work in a wider variety of online formats.

- The Institute’s website is a central hub for its work. **Website** analytics allow us to capture the growing influence of our work in the virtual landscape and the extent to which we are used as a repository for framing resources on critical social issues. The FrameWorks
website receives on average of 3,800 monthly online visitors with about half of those visitors being new (or unique) visitors to our website. In addition, about 300 of those monthly visitors each month come from other countries with Canada, England, Australia, Singapore and India comprising most of the international traffic on the website each month.

- Since 2009, the Institute has maintained a series of issue specific blogs as a common space for participants in our communities of practice to regularly connect with the group, share resources, and post framing related materials of interest to the group. By 2011, FrameWorks was host to five such blogs. In 2011, the Institute created several more issue specific blogs to coincide with those communities of practice as well as converted our alumni blog from a private online space to one that is now public. The Institute posted 70 entries to this public blog in 2011 and about 1000 visitors each month read at least one of the blogs posted by FrameWorks staff or fellows. In addition, other framing resources on the Institute’s website includes Frame Bytes and eZines (two different kinds of explanatory materials covering important framing topics of interest to nonprofit leaders).

- Each quarter, the Institute publishes a newsletter to provide updates to the nonprofit community about new or upcoming resources made available as part of our work. The newsletter is delivered via email to more than 2,800 leaders in the nonprofit sector who have asked to be put on our mailing list, have participated in a learning engagement of some type, or who have an interest in framing or social issues more generally. Three such newsletters were published in 2011.

**Evaluation of the Institute’s Work**

Like many nonprofit organizations today, the FrameWorks Institute has begun to think more carefully about our impact or how we identify, measure, and bring to scale our impacts in the nonprofit sector. FrameWorks has spent more than 11 years conducting multi-method, multi-disciplinary communications research, pioneering the use of Strategic Frame Analysis™, and teaching thousands of issue experts to align their communications with our recommendations. During that time, a lot has changed in the way that nonprofit organizations try to expand their constituency base, build public will, and further public understanding of specific social issues. FrameWorks continues to be at the forefront of transformation in the nonprofit sector and we recognize the need to assess our part in those unfolding transformations.

In 2011, the Institute piloted five case studies related to its communities of practice work, produced a video documenting the impact of FrameWorks’ training of child development experts in Canada, and published three evaluation reports. These resources will be made available on the Institute’s website in the spring of 2012.

**Communities of Practice 2011 Case Studies**

- Immigration Study Circle (Los Angeles, CA)
- Early Child Development Study Circle (Alberta, Canada)
- Oral Health Study Circle (State of Florida)
- Children’s Outcome Project Community of Practice (national)
- National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation Study Circle (national)

**Funding and Institutional Partnerships**

The Institute’s operating budget for most of 2011 totaled $3.1 million. While most of the Institute’s funders have been long-term supporters of our work, the Institute welcomed several new funders in 2011 including the
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Raikes Foundation, and the Novo Foundation.

In addition, our long-term partnerships with three particular funders allowed us to broaden the scope of our international work.

- FrameWorks continued its work with the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative on early child development, child mental health, and addiction issues in Alberta, Canada (funded by the Norlien Foundation).
- FrameWorks continued its work with the Harvard Center for the Developing Child by studying how international child advocacy organizations frame early child development.
- FrameWorks also partnered on a project funded by the Centers for Disease Control as well as on another project funded by the National Science Foundation.

**SUMMARY OF INDICATORS ON THE DASHBOARD**

FrameWorks remains committed to a robust, sustained and empirically grounded approach to engaging a field of practitioners in reframing the public discourse around social problems in the United States and abroad.

To ensure that the key indicators assessed as part of this annual evaluation are easily accessible, we’ve created a dashboard that summarizes the 2011 measurements. Figure 2 provides a snapshot of these indicators and it is our hope that they begin to set a foundation for broader understanding of the Institute’s efforts on behalf of the nonprofit sector.

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**Figure 2. FrameWorks Institute 2011 Dashboard**

**Dashboard Indicators 2011***

| 124 | Total Number of Research Reports on the FrameWorks Institute Website |
| 34  | Research Reports Added to FrameWorks Portfolio in 2011 |
| 5   | Case Studies from our Learning Engagements in 2011 |
| 26  | Public Policy Issue Areas Represented on the FrameWorks Institute Website |
| 3   | Staff Conferrals = 3 |
| 35  | Webinars and other Virtual Presentations Facilitated |
| 36  | Message Memos on the FrameWorks Institute Website |
| 16  | Toolkits on the FrameWorks Institute Website |
| 2,800 | Newsletters Delivered Each Quarter in 2011 |
| 10  | Number of Study Circles and Spokesperson Trainings Facilitated |
| 56  | Number of Workshops, Trainings, and Research Briefings Facilitated |

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Average Monthly Visitors to the Website: 3,800
Blog Views Per Month: 1000
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**FRAMEWORKS ONLINE RESOURCES**

To learn more about the work of the FrameWorks Institute, please visit our website at: [www.frameworksinstitute.org](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org)