

Planned Investments Funding Framework Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

Beginning this year, our investment strategy moves away from multiple program-specific funds to a set of three grant opportunities intended to complement each other and give organizations the ability to choose where they best align and can most effectively engage around our shared priorities. The three funds are:

Community Access & Response Fund – Provides flexible funding for organizations meeting immediate, more acute needs of individuals and families. For 2025/2026, this opportunity will be an open, competitive application.

Wraparound Services & Stability Fund – Provides flexible funding for organizations or established collaboratives providing wraparound services to stabilize individuals and families. For 2025/2026, this opportunity will be an open, competitive application.

Connect4Care & Systems Change Fund – Funding for regionally recognized institutions or collaboratives to address the systemic issues that are driving up the number of ALICE households and connect individuals to more integrated, seamless and dignified systems of care that support lasting, long-term stability for individuals and families at scale. For 2025/2026, this opportunity will be a closed, sole-source process.

For more details, please refer to the Timeline of key dates shared on 11/12.

Points of Contact for Further Questions

For more information on these grant opportunities, please visit our grants partner hub website at: UnitedWaySEM.org/Grants.

For questions or support related to the investment strategy and funding cycle for FY 2024-2025, please contact the Agency Relations team at: PartnerNetwork@UnitedWaySEM.org.

For questions or support related to accessing our grant management platform, SurveyMonkey Apply (SMA), please contact the Community Investments team at: SMA@UnitedWaySEM.org

Important Dates & Information Sessions

Upcoming:

- 11/12/2024 – Partner Network meeting
- 12/3/2024 from 10:15AM – 11:00AM - Partner Investment Coffee Hours
 - [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

- 12/4/2024 from 12:45PM – 1:30PM - Partner Investment Coffee Hours
 - [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)
- 12/5/2024 from 9:30AM – 10:15AM - Partner Investment Coffee Hours
 - [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

UWSEM Investments Partner 'Coffee Hours' are optional, informational sessions to address questions and provide clarification to partners regarding UWSEM's Investment Strategy.

Additional Dates:

- 1/21/2025 – Partner Network Meeting
- February 2025 – Fund Webinars*
- 3/3/2025 – Application Opens
- March 2025 – Open Office Hours*
- 4/11/2025 – Applications Due
- June 2025 – Award Notifications
- 7/1/2025 – Grant Period Begins
- 6/30/2026 – Grant Period Ends

*More information on how to register or attend will be forthcoming in early 2025.

General Questions on the Framework

1. Why are you redesigning the grant strategy in this way?

Given the limited resources available now and the incredible need across the four-county region we serve, we have updated our annual investment strategy, funding priorities, and application process. Our goal is to maximize the impact of every dollar to better and more sustainably support the needs of ALICE households and the organizations that serve them.

Our new funding framework is designed to resource and engage a coordinated network of partners providing complementary services under a shared vision to help households living below the ALICE threshold move from crisis to stability and from stability to prosperity in Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne counties.

Under this framework, we will continue to invest in a variety of programs/services across education, basic needs, advocacy, and racial equity with the understanding that each of these areas is critical to our mission and vision for community.

United Way staff will work diligently with partners to provide a clear understanding of these shifts and opportunities for partnership.

This is also an opportunity for us to make changes to our application process to reduce administrative burden and center the experiences of agencies, clarify mutual expectations, and support equitable decision making. Instead of submitting multiple applications across different domains of service, agencies will submit one application for the breadth of work they intend to do in the funding stream best aligned with that work.

What is ALICE?

ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, and represents the growing number of families who are unable to afford the basics of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and technology. In southeastern Michigan, more than 40 percent of households struggle to afford their basic needs.

The 2024 ALICE Report, produced by the [Michigan Association of United Ways](#) in association with [United for ALICE](#), reveals the magnitude of financial hardship in Michigan.

The report measures how families are faring by comparing household earnings to the true cost of living in our region. It's a more accurate measurement of household finances than the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), which is based on food prices established in the 1970s and indexed to inflation, meaning it doesn't capture the reality of essential household expenses like health care, food and child care.

While 14% of households in our region are reported to live at or below the poverty level, an additional 28% of households have incomes below the ALICE survival budget. Combined, these two numbers make up the percentage of total Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne County households that fell below the ALICE Survival Budget Threshold.

2. Why is United Way focused on ALICE families?

At United Way, we mobilize a network of hundreds of partners and thousands of donors, advocates and volunteers to advance equitable communities where households are stable and children thrive.

The ALICE Report serves as our guidepost for making informed decisions about how and where we invest limited resources to maximize community impact. It highlights areas of focus where we can target not only financial and technical support resources, but where we can advocate for policies that have the greatest potential for impact on ALICE households. It also provides evidence of what many already know to be true – that too many working households in our state and in our region are just one missed paycheck or unexpected doctor's bill away from financial crisis.

They are the reason United Way for Southeastern Michigan is working alongside our partners and community to close the gap between what people are earning and the cost of living so that every family, in every ZIP code, has an equal opportunity to thrive.

3. Where can I learn more about ALICE?

- <https://unitedwaysem.org/our-work/alice-report/>
- <https://www.uwmich.org/alice-report>
- <https://www.unitedforalice.org/state-overview/Michigan>

4. How do I learn more about Connect4Care and how to engage there?

Across funds, United Way staff will offer stewardship and engagement opportunities to partners, including strategic introductions, trainings, and free tools to improve organizations' readiness to participate in a transformed, more connected ecosystem of support for ALICE households.

Each fund will have different expectations for partners aligned to the opportunity's intent. Details about expectations (e.g. reporting, training, etc.) will be shared as the funds are rolled out.

5. Can an organization submit one application in each fund?

No. For the 2025/26 grant cycle, the Community Access & Response Fund and the Wraparound Services & Stability Fund will be highly competitive processes. Each organization must select the fund where it believes it will have the most competitive application aligned to grant intent, resources available, and expectations for funding.

This year, the Connect4Care & Systems Change Fund will operate through a closed, invitation-only process for organizations engaged in advocacy efforts and organizations resourced to support activities around the Connect4Care Community Information Exchange. Organizations supported through the Connect4Care & Systems Change Fund are also eligible to apply for funding in the Community Access & Response Fund OR the Wraparound Services & Stability Fund only if they are applying to support different programs and costs from the activities funded through the Connect4Care & Systems Change grant. We will consider the merits of these applications against the full spectrum of competitive applications.

6. What do you mean by “established collaboratives”?

Under the Wraparound Services & Stability Fund, applicants have the option to submit an application under a collaborative model to request funding. Collaboratives that can demonstrate they have been working together in some formal capacity for at least one year are eligible to apply as a collaborative entity. Collaboratives will submit a single application that includes the lead organization and a list of each additional partner. Under this model, partners will have the discretion and flexibility to choose how they distribute funding among each other to maximize the impact of their work together. Collaboratives may span geographies, services areas and other distinguishing factors.

7. What is the spending period of this grant?

July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

8. Does an organization need to be a non-profit to receive funding?

Yes, these funds are meant to be dispersed as awards to non-profit organizations. An organization must be in good standing with the State of Michigan and the Internal Revenue Service and will be

required to upload a copy of their IRS designation letter, 990 form, W-9, financial statements and current Michigan Solicitation License. Organizations may apply via a fiduciary, if applicable.

9. How does United Way arrive at funding decisions?

United Way is committed to investing in organizations and groups aligned with our impact focus areas, and ensuring that emerging and smaller-sized organizations advancing community solutions for ALICE families also have access to funding.

United Way remains thoughtful about how we invest and distribute resources into community for shared impact. Applications will be scored using a rubric (provided in the application materials) and consider annual budget size, current financial position as well as compliance to state and Federal regulations.

Decisions will be made based on the strength of the application, proposed services, geographic spread, service population, among other considerations to ensure that the portfolio of funded partners is reflective and is responsive to the diverse needs of our community.

Additionally, our review process will include feedback from community representatives, including governance committees, the local human services sector, businesses, higher education, subject-matter experts, community groups, and people with lived experience. This group of volunteers will serve as a thought partner to ensure the cohort reflects the diverse makeup of organizations in our sector and needs of our community members.

When grant opportunities are released in Spring of 2025, the scoring rubrics along with other grant resources will be available on our website.

Organization and Financial Information

10. Does an organization need to have an audit, or will a financial review and 990 form be sufficient?

Depending on your annual operating budget total amount, organizations may be required to have an audit with the information uploaded to your Organization and Financial Information profile in Survey Monkey Apply. For more information on the specific documents required for your organization to fulfill this requirement, please refer to the Financial and Audit Requirement resource available in SMA under the Financial Information task: [UWSEM Financial and Audit Requirements resource](#).

If there are barriers to your organization providing this information, please contact us to discuss the specific circumstances for your organization at PartnerNetwork@unitedwaysem.org.

11. We are currently in the middle of our audit. Will our application still be considered if the audit isn't complete before the application due date?

Yes, please communicate this to us within the application.

12. If our 2024 audit is still in progress, can we upload 2023 information?

Yes, we are looking for the most recent audit information and understand that based on an organization's fiscal year and associated lags in financial review, this may be the case for some organizations. Please provide the most current information available at the time you apply.