



FY 2026-2027 Community Investments

Frequently Asked Questions

Application Window: March 2 – March 27 at 5:00PM

Investment Framework Overview

United Way's Funding Framework is centered around a set of three grant opportunities designed to resource and engage a coordinated network of partners providing a continuum of services under a shared vision of helping ALICE individuals and families move from crisis to stability and from stability to prosperity across our region. The three funds are:

Community Access & Response Fund (Fund 1) – Provides flexible funding for organizations meeting immediate, more acute needs of individuals and families. For 2026/2027, this opportunity will be an open, competitive application.

Wraparound Services & Stability Fund (Fund 2) – Provides flexible funding for organizations or established collaboratives providing wraparound services to stabilize individuals and families. For 2026/2027, this opportunity will be a closed invitation-only process.

Connect4Care & Systems Change Fund (Fund 3) – 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 2026/2027, this opportunity will be a closed invitation-only process.



General Application

Q: Is United Way running an open, competitive application process this year?

A: Yes. The Community Access and Response Fund investment process is an open call for applications from both potential and current funded partners who meet the eligibility criteria and funding priorities laid out in the application.

Q: When is the application due?

A: The application window for all Funds is March 2-27. All applications must be completed in our grant management portal [SurveyMonkey Apply](#).

Q: Where on United Way's website are the RFPs and Scoring Rubrics published?

A: All information related to United Way's investment process is located on our website. In mid-February we will publish the Application Questions and Scoring Rubrics here: <https://unitedwaysem.org/our-partners/grants-hub/proposal-opportunities/>

Q: Will applications be in SurveyMonkey?

A: Yes. All applications must be submitted through our grant management portal, SurveyMonkey Apply (SMA). To access United Way's SMA platform please visit: <https://apply.unitedwaysem.org/>.

Q: What are the priority service areas for the Community Access & Response Fund?

A: This year, the Community Access and Response Fund has two priority areas:

- 1) Emergency Food Supports - This includes food pantries, community or soup kitchens, and food voucher or gift card programs



2) STEAM-focused Out-of-School Time programming in Washtenaw County

Q: Can you apply for more than one Fund and/or both priority areas in Fund 1?

A: No. We are only accepting one application per organization. Organizations must choose the priority area that best aligns with their services or programming and offers the strongest potential for competitiveness.

Q: What is the grant term?

A: July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027

Q: What is the funding range?

A: The funding range for the Community Access & Response Fund, which is our only open opportunity this year is \$15,000-\$50,000.

Q: If I have never applied for a grant from United Way, what is my first step?

A: An Organizational & Financial Profile must be created in United Way for Southeastern Michigan's grant management portal, [SurveyMonkey Apply \(SMA\)](#) in order to access and complete a grant application. Organizations that are already in SMA do not need to complete the form but should make updates as needed. New organizations will have to complete the initial profile. If you are uncertain whether your organization has an existing SurveyMonkey Apply account, please reach out to United Way's Grants Management team at sma@unitedwaysem.org for confirmation. For instructions on how to set up an account and create your Organizational & Financial Profile click here:

- [Setting Up an SMA Account](#)
- [Updating your Organizational & Financial Profile](#)



Eligibility

Q: Does an organization need to be a nonprofit to receive funding?

A: Yes, these funds are meant to be dispersed as awards to nonprofit 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, and financial statements. Organizations may apply via a fiduciary, if applicable.

Q: If we have a grant that is closing with United Way, will we still be eligible?

A: Yes. This is an open call for applications from both potential and current funded partners who meet the eligibility criteria and funding priorities laid out in the applications.

Q: Can an organization use a fiduciary to apply?

A: Yes. Organizations may apply via a fiduciary, if applicable. All applicant organizations must be 501c3s 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 and financial statements.

If your organization is utilizing a fiduciary to receive funds, the fiduciary must be the organization that creates the organizational account within [SurveyMonkey Apply](#). They also must complete the Organization and Financial Information profile. If the fiduciary organization is unsure if their organization has a SurveyMonkey account, please have them reach out to sma@unitedwaysem.org.

United Way suggests having the fiduciary invite a representative of the sponsored/implementing organization to be a member of the account so that the sponsored/implementing organization can complete the application and subsequent reporting requirements.



Q: Can both the fiduciary and sponsored organization apply for a grant?

A: Yes. Both a fiduciary and the sponsored organization may submit individual applications for this grant. However, the programming and services that each is applying for should be different and specific to their organization. Organizations who are acting as a fiduciary AND applying on their own should first contact the United Way team before they begin the application process by emailing sma@unitedwaysem.org.

Q: Are programs that have their administrative home at a university eligible to apply?

A: Yes. We welcome submissions from applicants using a fiscal agent, including from higher education institutions such as colleges and universities. All applicant organizations must be 501c3s in good standing with the State of Michigan and the Internal Revenue Service.

If your organization is utilizing a fiduciary to receive funds, the fiduciary must be the organization that creates the organizational account within SurveyMonkey Apply and the Organization and Financial Information profile. If the fiduciary organization is unsure if their organization has a SurveyMonkey account, please have them contact the United Way team at sma@unitedwaysem.org.

Note the following difference when it comes to required documentation for applicants using a higher education fiscal agent:

- Budget, financials, and balance sheet/audits: Submit your program/project OVERALL current and previous year annual budgets. We do not need the budgets, nor audit of the higher education institution.



Budget

Q: What are the general overall budget guidelines?

A: The requested amount should not exceed 15% of the prior year's revenue or current operating budget. When reviewing budgets, we do flag line items for overhead/indirect that are above 15%. We also look for benefits to be no more than 30% of your salary line item. If you have extenuating circumstances that make either of these difficult for your organization, please explain that in your application.

Q: Can organizations apply for general operating or a specific project?

A: We are committed to providing organizations with flexible, operational funding to amplify impact. We are asking for organizations to fill out a budget and are leaving the use of funds description up to each organization. We ask that organizations stay within a 15% allowance for overhead/indirect expenditures in alignment with the [current Federal de minimis rate](#), and approximately a 30% benefit rate. Aside from these stipulations, budgets can be very flexible to meet the organization's needs.

Evaluation and Scoring

Q: How does United Way arrive at funding decisions?

A: 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.

Q: Is past performance a funding award consideration?

A: United Way is excited to work with values-aligned community partners in our region. As we look to the future, we take a variety of factors into consideration, including past performance, communication, and timeliness of report submissions.

Q: If United Way does not fund the entire amount requested, would United Way consider funding at a lower amount?

A: Yes. We do reserve the right to adjust the funding amount and may not award organizations their full ask. When this occurs, organizations are given an opportunity to revise their metrics and budget to align with the funded amount.

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, please email: PartnerNetworks@UnitedWaySEM.org
- For questions or support related to accessing our grant management platform, SurveyMonkey Apply (SMA), please contact the Grants Management team at: SMA@UnitedWaySEM.org