



# United Way of Great Chattanooga

## Community Investments Grant Application Guidelines

### 2025-2026

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#### **About the United Way of Greater Chattanooga**

United Way of Greater Chattanooga's (UWGC) mission is to unite people and resources in building a stronger, healthier community. We envision a community where all people achieve their full human potential through UWGC's three areas of focus - Opportunities for All Children, Economic Mobility for Families, and A More Connected Community. From the unique position at the center of the nonprofit, government, philanthropic, and business communities, UWGC drives focused collaboration among our partners to address community-specific avenues for everyone to engage in creating social change.

The purpose of UWGC's Community Investments is to drive transformational change in our community by directing our limited resources towards data-driven efforts that deliver the highest return on investment as measured by Opportunities for All Children, Economic Mobility for Families, and A More Connected Community outcomes within the UWGC 2030 Impact Agenda framework. We will continue to emphasize the importance of collaboration across non-profit organizations and we will enhance our grantmaking focus on 2-generational Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) households with children.

#### **Purpose of Application Guidelines**

The purpose of the Application Guidelines is to clearly communicate each aspect of the Community Investment Application process and, ultimately, to encourage organizations doing outstanding work within UWGC's three pillars to apply for funding.



UWGC has an open, competitive, and inclusive application process to help identify organizations that demonstrate the greatest potential for impact. UWGC Community Investment grants are designed to fund exceptional programs through the implementation of the Community Investment process, a competitive and transparent allocation process that is open to all nonprofit (501c3) organizations that meet eligibility criteria.

**Funding Opportunities:**

1. Impact Fund: Investing in local nonprofits through competitive grants for collaborative and transformational work to find solutions to systemic issues in our community. Length of funding – 3 years (July 2025 – June 2028).
2. Catalyst Fund: Accelerating impact by investing in and supporting innovation and collaboration efforts. Length of funding – 1 year (July 2025 – June 2026).
3. Bridge Fund: Supports programming which provides direct support for those who find themselves in a moment of immediate need. Length of funding – 1 year (July 2025 – June 2026).

The Impact Fund supports programs and initiatives addressing solutions to systemic issues within our communities as measured within UWGC’s 2030 Impact Agenda framework – including two-generation approaches that largely serve ALICE households with children. Strong preference will also be given to partners who have at least one cross-sector collaborative partnership with public, non-profit, and/or private stakeholders. Types of applications for Impact would include data-backed programs or initiatives with proven results; provide comprehensive and coordinated services; and high quality, data-centered and effective services that can be grown and accelerated.

The Catalyst Fund supports programs and initiatives looking to accelerate impact through Innovation. Catalyst Fund applications look to fund innovative growth, emerging ideas, or creative solutions measured by outcomes within UWGC’s 2030 Impact Agenda framework – including two-generation approaches that largely serve ALICE households with children. UWGC highly encourages applicants to the Catalyst Fund to explore collaborative opportunities with one or more organizations to advance innovative solutions.

Types of Applications for Catalyst-Innovation:

- A new program or new aspects of an existing program
- Scaling up or expansion of a current program
- Test a potential solution to a root cause issue or barrier to effectiveness in your work

The Bridge Fund supports programming which provides direct support for those who find themselves in a moment of immediate need (food, health services, transportation, disaster relief, housing, or childcare).

**Application Requirements & Limits:**

For the 2025 application cycle, organizations are allowed to submit applications to the Impact Fund, Bridge Fund and/or the Catalyst Fund. While organizations can submit applications for all three funding types, an organization *will not* be awarded both Impact and Catalyst funding simultaneously. An organization may be approved for Bridge funding in addition to either an Impact or Catalyst award.

Because the dollars United Way of Greater Chattanooga raises stay in the geographical area and community where they are raised, organizations within:

- Hamilton County are allowed to apply once to each fund (Impact, Bridge, and Catalyst).
- Catoosa, Dade, and/or Walker Counties (North Georgia) can submit applications for either the Catalyst or Bridge funds only. Impact funding is not currently available for this geographic region.
- Marion and Sequatchie Counties (Tennessee) are not currently being considered at this time.

*We are not equipped to support the following proposals for funding:*

- Capital Campaigns
- Endowments
- Individuals
- Membership dues
- Organizations that have a written policy of discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity or organizations that foster or encourage racial, religious, class, or other prejudices.
- Private schools
- Sponsorships or fundraising events

**Application Timeline:**

- January 15, 2025: Grant Portal Opens (via Foundant)
- February 5, 2025: Deadline for Pre-Application/LOI submission (via Foundant)
- January 16, 2025 – February 27, 2025 CI Staff Office Hours – every Tuesday & Thursday from 11am-12pm EST via Zoom
- February 27, 2025: Deadline for Full Application submission by 5:00pm (EST)
- February 2025: Volunteer Grant Reviewer Trainings
- March 2025: Volunteer Grant Reviewers begin review of applications
- April 2025 Volunteer Grant Reviewers evaluations submitted; Community Investment Committee (CIC) orientation
- May 2025: CIC meetings with funding recommendations made to UWGC Board of Directors
- June 2025: Grant Award Announcements
- July 1, 2025: Award dispersal to grant recipients begins

## Overview of Application Process

Below are the steps in the Community Investment Application process.

1. Pre-Application/LOI Submission
2. Eligibility & Pre-Application/LOI Review by UWGC staff
3. Full Application Submission
4. Application Review & Scoring from Volunteer Grant Reviewers
5. Application & Scoring Consideration from Community Investment Committee
6. Funding Recommendations by Community Investment Committee to UWGC Board of Directors
7. Review & Approval of Funding Recommendations by UWGC Board of Directors
8. Funding Approval
9. Agency Agreement Form Signed and Returned to UWGC

The process opens and officially begins on Wednesday January 15, 2025, with an Eligibility Review and Pre-Application Screening running concurrently to determine whether an organization will be invited to complete the full Community Investment Application.

The Pre-Application/LOI will ask the applying organization to provide a high-level introduction of the proposal to demonstrate (1) alignment with UWGC's 2030 Impact Agenda framework; (2) understanding of the service population and community context; (3) overview of the proposal's approach; and (4) general organizational information

Pre-Applications/LOI are due no later than February 5, 2025, to give ample time to access and complete the full application, if approved. After the Pre-Application/LOI is submitted, each Pre-Application/LOI will be evaluated by UWGC staff and will be approved or denied on a rolling basis. If the applicant is approved to move to the next stage, all answers from the Pre-Application/LOI will be brought forward into the full application with the option to edit or add for greater clarity and alignment.

Pre-Applications/LOI that pass initial evaluations and are selected to proceed further will be notified and asked to proceed to the full application. Full applications are due by February 27, 2025, at 5:00pm.

Throughout the application period, UWGC staff will host weekly office hours to address any questions or concerns regarding each step of the application process. If additional questions are needed outside of the scheduled office hours, organizations may request a meeting with a UWGC staff member.

When the Community Investment Applications are submitted, each application will be collected by UWGC staff and shared with Volunteer Grant Reviewers for review and scoring based on grading



rubrics. Volunteer Grant Reviewers may interact with applicants to clarify questions for submitted applications.

Following the scoring of the applications, the Community Investment Committee volunteers will review the application and scoring considerations and provide funding recommendations within the limits of available funds raised through UWGC's workplace campaign and individual donations. Recommendations will be brought to UWGC's Board of Directors for final review and approval.

All programs are evaluated using standardized tools that measure the relative strength of the application. Successful programs will demonstrate an ability to achieve client success in the priority areas identified by UWGC. Final funding decisions cannot be appealed. Applicants may request feedback through emailing [impact@uwchatt.org](mailto:impact@uwchatt.org).

Funding decisions and notifications will be communicated after the Board of Directors meeting. The first set of monthly payments will begin in July 2025. Contracts must be signed and returned to UWGC no later than July 15, 2025. Funding periods follow the fiscal year from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

### **Organization Eligibility**

Organizations should review the Eligibility Checklist to ensure minimum requirements are met. The Eligibility Checklist includes the following:

1. The organization must meet the IRS standards for nonprofit status 501(c)(3), faith-based organization, or governmental entity. All applications will be asked to submit your organization's IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter.
2. The applicant may be asked to supply the organization's most recent IRS Form 990 or 990 EZ. Can the organization submit 990 or 990EZ upon request in the future (churches are exempt)?
3. The organization must be chartered prior to January 1, 2022.
4. The organization is committed to serving ALICE households with children through a 2-generational approach (Impact & Catalyst-Innovation).
5. The organization demonstrates a commitment towards collaboration with another local organization(s) (nonprofits, businesses, or government) to accelerate impact.
6. The organization must provide services and have staff (full-time, part-time, and/or volunteers) in the geographical region served.
7. The organization must be able to supply the organization's EIN/Tax ID#.
8. UWGC conducts business through the internet and its website. Applicants must be able to send and receive email.
9. UWGC makes its investment payments through EFT and will request appropriate banking information from organizations receiving funds. Grant recipients must be able to provide banking information.



10. The organization must be committed and able to make measurable improvements for clients in one of the three focus areas for which United Way will invest funds. Measurable improvements must align with published outcomes and indicators.
11. The organization must be willing and able to enter into a provider Agreement with United Way of Greater Chattanooga regarding the provision of services in compliance with United Way requirements - including submission of beneficiary reports of client demographics, program reports detailing outcomes achieved, and any supporting information, as requested by UWGC.

### **Community Investment Application Open Office Hours**

Any organization is invited to join our UWGC Community Investment team every Tuesday and Thursday from 11am-12pm starting on Thursday January 16, 2025. To register and gain access to the Zoom meeting, please visit our website and click the registration link.

After the Eligibility & Pre-Application deadline on February 5, 2025, only organizations who have been approved to apply for the final applications may continue to attend office hours. Denied organizations may request meetings with UWGC staff members after the close of the application, review, and awarding periods beginning in July 2025 by emailing [impact@uwchatt.org](mailto:impact@uwchatt.org) to discuss proposal ideas and steps for future cycles.

### **Changes in Reported Information**

If reported information changes during the Community Investment Application & Review process (after submission of the application but before funding has been awarded), the organization must submit written (preferably via email) notification to UWGC immediately after the organization becomes aware of the change that explains what the change has been, why the change was made, and what the effect of the change is on the program/proposal. Please direct such communication to [impact@uwchatt.org](mailto:impact@uwchatt.org).

If reported information changes after the proposal has been funded (after the grant has been awarded and organization has started to receive funding), the organization must submit notification to UWGC within 30 days after the organization becomes aware of the change that explains: what the change has been, why the change was made, and what the effect of the change is on the program. Please direct such communication to [impact@uwchatt.org](mailto:impact@uwchatt.org).

### **Funding Acceptance**

If the application is selected for United Way Community Investment Funding – either partially or fully – the Organization will receive the following documents:

- Funding Letter
- UWGC - Organization Agreement Form
- ACH Authorization Form



By executing the Funding Year 2025-2026 Organization Agreement, the Organization accepts all United Way funding as awarded in the United Way Funding Letter. For the Organization to receive the awarded funds, the Organization must agree to all UWGC requirements, as outlined in the Organization Agreement Form. The Agreement must be signed and dated by the Organization's President/CEO.

In the following situations, an email must be submitted to United Way outlining the reasons for changes or declined funding:

1. If any program requires material changes as a result of the level of funding awarded. Changes to the program and continued funding of the program are subject to the approval of the Community Investment Committee.
2. If the Organization elects to decline funding.

Emails communicating material changes or declined funding should be sent to **impact@uwchatt.org**.

#### **UWGC Community Investment Priorities: 2030 Impact Agenda Framework**

UWGC is looking to fund programs that align with our three Focus Areas of Opportunities for All Children, Economic Mobility for Families, and A More Connected Community. The problems facing the Greater Chattanooga region are immense, and they need comprehensive solutions. United Way is looking for collaborative solutions that can make an impact today and build in the years to come.

There is no one solution to solve the challenges every individual and household in our community faces. Our framework, therefore, highlights the greatest ways organizations can comprehensively provide the next best steps for a person's whole life: from birth to childhood to adulthood and beyond.