

2025 Request for Proposals – Impact Fund



Introduction

United Way of the Midlands (UWM) is pleased to offer its 2025 Impact Plan for grant funding. Opportunities in this Plan will support the great work of our local non-profit community and collaborative work with partners. We are proud to work alongside our community partners to address critical needs and create pathways for resiliency and success. Thank you to our partners, volunteers, and donors for your dedication to this work.

Background on UWM

United Way of the Midlands (UWM) was established in Columbia in 1925. We provide critical health and human services needs in Calhoun, Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry, Richland, and Orangeburg Counties. With a mission to unite people and resources to improve the quality of life in the Midlands, United Way of the Midlands focuses on helping provide a strong safety net, space for non-profit collaboration, and pathways to resiliency. More than 30,000 donors support United Way, and we work with 73 Community Impact Partners. Our annual impact on the Midlands is over \$20 million.

Our Work

UWM deploys community resources through direct programs including operating a free dental and eye clinic and literacy tutoring program, coordinating community systems such as our role as lead of the local homeless coalition, and funding community programs. We served over 35,000 people last year through these collaborations. UWM offers grant funding through a variety of sources, including our Community Impact fund and the federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program and Continuum of Care.

Assessment of Community Needs

In 2021, UWM completed a Community Assessment. This was the first scan of community needs and aspirations in several years. The Assessment process used data in our focus areas of health, education, and financial stability plus a series of community conversations to include the voice of people who live and work in our six-counties. The Assessment showed systems level needs such as deeper collaboration among the non-profit sector, improved community voice and collaboration in local government policy making, and the effects of the Pandemic on community engagement and overall well-being. The Assessment also highlighted the deep need for affordable housing, workforce development, supports for children and families such as childcare, youth development programs, and career exploration. Other needs included mental health supports due to the Pandemic, fresh food access, transportation, and supports for home repair. UWM's 2021 Community Assessment can be found at www.uway.org

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES 2025-2026

Overview

UWM believes that strong foundations for success are created through meeting basic needs, collaboration with local partners, and addressing root causes of issues. Homelessness, food insecurity and other basic need gaps are indicators people have other unmet needs that are causing instability. Our goal is to play a role in addressing basic needs, but to look further upstream to more comprehensive solutions rather than one-time assistance that often perpetuates cycles of poverty.

For FY 2025-26, UWM will focus Impact grant funding in four key areas:

Competitive funding categories

1. Ensuring a strong safety net
2. Creating pathways to resiliency

Special funding categories (See page 5 for more information)

3. Capacity building, especially non-profits serving more rural areas
4. Whole Family Strategy to creating pathways out of poverty for families with children

FY 2025-26 COMPETITIVE FUNDING CATEGORIES

Applications with be accepted until March 14, 2025, at 5:00 pm through the [e-CImpact Database](#). Late applications will not be accepted. Priority points in application scoring will be allocated to programs primarily serving or located in our more rural counties of Calhoun, Fairfield, Newberry, and Orangeburg.

Ensuring a strong safety net*

UWM plays a significant role in supporting our basic needs safety net in the Midlands. From funding, convening partners, and providing leadership, we help people reach and maintain stability. In continuing this role, UWM will allocate competitive grant funding towards projects in the six-county region that support basic needs.

Eligible safety net grant strategies include:

- Food insecurity
- Healthcare, including specialty care
- Behavioral healthcare
- Housing services (sheltering, case management, etc.)
- Home repair

Creating pathways to resiliency*

While ensuring basic needs are met is the first step, addressing root causes of economic instability is critical to creating successful pathways. Resources to develop these pathways to long-term stability will be awarded to programs through our competitive grant process.

Eligible resiliency pathways grant strategies include:

- Early education support
- Youth development and social emotional learning
- Workforce development
- Financial education

**Please review the catalogue of indicators at the end of this document to determine whether your program aligns with the reporting expectations for this grant.*

Application Levels for Competitive Funding

Seed & Support: \$5,000 - \$10,000

- Intended to support projects or capacity-building initiatives, particularly for smaller and/or rural organizations
- Fewer requirements for application and reporting
- Financial audit additional documentation needed for organization above \$500,000 in revenue

Innovation: \$25,000 - \$75,000

- Intended to support programs of mid-to-large size organizations that offer innovative solutions to community issues.
- Requires additional documentation such as copy of independent audit for all applicants regardless of revenue size

Transformation: \$100,000 - \$200,000

- Intended to support established, high-impact community programs that demonstrate:
 - Evidence-based or evidence-informed practices
 - Trauma-informed services
 - Process(es) for improving programming through evaluation
 - Collaboration with community partners
- Highly competitive application pool with a more rigorous application review process
- Independent audit required

DEADLINES

Full applications for competitive funding due March 14, 2025, at 5:00 pm

Awards will be announced for competitive funding by May 23, 2025

FAQs for competitive grants

Grant Eligibility for competitive grants

- All applicants must be UWM certified Impact Partners in good standing or the ability to achieve certification by April 30, 2025. For more information about becoming a UWM partner agency, please contact Elliott Epps at eepps@uway.org
- Local non-profits seeking resources that are not certified Impact Partners are encouraged to partner with eligible agencies.

Ideal Grantee

- Demonstrates meaningful partnerships with both the people they serve and other community agencies that offer similar or complementary services.
- Is thoughtful of inclusion and equity in their organizational practices and program operations.
- Has healthy mix of funding supporting the program/organization. UWM's resources should not make up the majority of funding.
- Understands the effects of trauma and uses approaches that incorporates trauma-informed care or other practices.
- Uses evidenced-based, promising practices, or employs strategies driven by direct consumer input on effectiveness.
- Reviews program for performance improvements or adjustments on a regular basis.
- Reviews program delivery, staff training, and agencies policies for bias or perpetuation of structural racism.
- Collects demographic information on participants and has processes in place to assess

participant financial need for services.

- Applies for only essential resources needed.

On the application, there's an option to be considered by Women in Philanthropy. What does that mean?

Women in Philanthropy (WIP), an engagement network of UWM, are donor investors that focus their resources on increasing the financial stability of women and women with children. WIP prioritizes programs that serve women that may have economic instability, but not in active crisis such as currently experiencing homelessness. Agencies that wish to be considered by WIP should indicate this on the application using the check box. WIP encourages opportunities for their members to provide volunteer service with the program. If not selected by WIP, programs will automatically be included in the remaining Community Impact application review teams for further consideration.

What is the start and end date?

Grants will start July 1, 2025, and end June 30, 2026. Funds must be expended during the grant period. Carryover funds are not allowed.

Are grants reimbursable?

No, UWM distributes funds monthly in equal amounts sent by direct deposit.

How much should we apply for?

Agencies should submit one application for competitive funding categories to address all strategies listed within our focus areas and outcomes they propose to address. We use a tiered application system with additional program, reporting, and financial accountability as the amount requested increases. The minimum grant size is \$5,000. Typically, UWM will not provide grant funding to a single agency more than \$200,000 across all competitive strategies, and most grants will be lower than the maximum amount. You will be asked to provide a rationale for the amount requested. Grants of any level are not guaranteed even for programs previously funded.

Is there an average grant size?

No, but we would consider grants above \$100,000 significant and most awards would not be at that level or above.

Should we apply for more than we need, just in case?

No, apply for the essential resources needed only. Sometimes applicants will apply for slightly more than their needs in case grant awards are less than hoped. However, UWM will likely not have time to negotiate budgets so applying for more than what is essential may result in an award not being issued. Also, a scoring element on the application is the rationale for the amount requested and return on investment.

How are funding decisions made?

UWM deploys trained volunteers to review applications according to a scoring matrix based on return on investment, rationale for amount requested, application quality, partnerships with complementary programs, and clarity. UWM's Committee Impact Committee makes funding recommendations to our Board of Directors. Grants are typically funded according to scoring results; however, special consideration is given to programs operating in rural areas and programs demonstrating a high level of community partnerships.

You referred to a 'healthy mix of funding'. What does that mean?

Typically, UWM will not fund more than half of a program or organization's total budget (if the organization only has the single program you are seeking support). This applies to requesting more than 50% of a staff position as well.

Are grants renewable next year?

FY 2025-26 grants are one-year and not renewable. Each grant year is a new competitive process; however, we do consider historic program performance in future funding rounds.

Is there a match requirement?

No, there is not a matching funds requirement for competitive category grants. If you are working with the two-generation Siemer model match is required, contact staff for details.

Can we apply for general operating support?

Yes, but your work must address UWM’s focus areas and catalogue of outcomes. We do not have caps on operating versus program specific support; however, budgets should be detailed and requests reasonable. In other words, apply for the funds you need to make a program work but only request essential resources. Applying for more than the essential amount needed may result in a lack of an award.

As a United Way partner agency are we guaranteed funds?

No, grant funds are highly competitive. We typically have many more requests than resources will allow to be funded. At times, even quality programs or quality applications cannot be awarded based on resource levels. Receiving funding in a previous grant cycle does not guarantee additional support.

Are there any special requirements for certain grants?

If you serve people experiencing homelessness, participation in the Homeless Management Information System and participation in the annual point-in-time count are required.

Are there income thresholds for participants receiving services?

We expect that participants receiving services would not be able to receive the assistance without the resources provided by our grant. Programs should have methods in place to track income and other indicators of need for the services.

Can we receive assistance with the application?

Jennifer Moore and Will Price are the contacts for questions and assistance. We are happy to talk through your program, budget, or application questions. We ask you only use these contacts and also refrain from asking our Board members or other volunteers to intervene in the funding process. Funding decisions are based on program quality, alignment with Impact goals and outcomes, and return on investment demonstrated in the grant application. We post the scoring tool used by the review volunteers on our website.

When will we hear about a funding decision?

Awards will be announced by May 23, 2025.

Can we submit multiple applications?

No, submit one application for all competitive funding category strategies/outcomes proposed.

FY 2025-26 SPECIAL FUNDING CATEGORIES

Special funding categories are separate from the competitive Impact Funding. The most recent partner solicitation for UWM’s Whole Family Strategy was in 2022 and UWM will continue to work with these partners for the 2025-26 grant cycle. Capacity-building opportunities will be announced throughout the year.

How do we ask questions?

UWM will host a virtual information session on Friday, February 7, 2025 at 1pm. [Click here to join the meeting.](#) After the session, if you have questions, please contact Will Price at wprice@uway.org.

[Apply Now for Competitive Impact Funding](#)

Application Scoring Tool

This is the tool reviewers use to score each application.

1 = Does not meet expectations | 2 = Needs improvement | 3 = Meets expectations | 4 = Exceeds expectations | 5 = Superior/Outstanding

Application Elements	Rating (Weight)	Score	Reviewer Comments
PROGRAM INFORMATION			
Agency and Program Description <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the program’s purpose and service delivery clearly defined? Does the described program align with how the organization supports the community? Are program objectives and expected impact clearly defined? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X2 Max Score:10		
Rationale of Requested Amount <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the rationale presented justify the amount requested? Is it clear whether this amount will help the program accomplish its objectives and deliver services? Is it clear how this funding will be used? Did the agency provide clear information to support their need (such as loss of funding, increased service levels, per unit cost, comparison costs to other interventions)? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X3 Max Score:15		
Root Cause <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this program have a process for identifying root causes of client challenges or needs? Does this program address those root causes to create change for individuals or communities? <p>(A “root cause” is an underlying issue that has caused an individual/household to find themselves in a difficult situation. This will vary by the service(s) provided and the population served.)</p>	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X2 Max Score: 5		
Comparison to other agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the agency seem informed about other services offered in the community? Is it clear how this program fits within the community’s network of services? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X1 Max Score: 5		
Existing Program Outcomes OR New Program Justification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If it is an existing program, does the applicant effectively explain the program’s success/impact through previous program results, including year-to-year program comparisons and outcomes for long-term participants? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X2 Max Score: 15		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If it is a new program, does the applicant provide sufficient justification for why this program is needed? 			
Lesson Learned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the agency provide any type of recent lesson learned? Is the agency able to identify areas of improvement and make necessary changes? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X1 Max Score: 5		
Evidence Base (Transformation-level only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the program model evidence-based or evidence-informed? Was a model cited? If not directly informed by an outside model, did the agency explain the principles or foundations of the program? If the program replicates a proven program model, does the applicant explain any revisions they made to the design for their program? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X1 Max Score: 5		
Evaluation (Transformation-level only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the agency have a clear process for program evaluation? Does the agency make informed improvements to programs by using evaluation results? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X2 Max Score: 10		
Trauma-Informed Care (Transformation-level only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well does the agency incorporate trauma-informed care into the program? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X1 Max Score: 5		
TARGET POPULATION			
Population Served and Accessibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well does the agency demonstrate knowledge of the population this program serves? Does the agency seem intentional in making their program accessible to those who need it? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X1 Max Score: 5		
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION			
DEI Policies and Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the agency active in aligning itself with its DEI policies and procedures? Is the agency intentional in understanding the DEI needs of its clients? Are policies and procedures effectively implemented at the program level? 	1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X1 Max Score: 5		

PROPOSED PROGRAM BUDGET			
<p>Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the budget and budget narrative clearly explain how grant funds will be spent? Does the budget demonstrate a healthy mix of funding? (Typically, UWM will not fund more than half of a program or organization’s total budget) Is this a reasonable use of UWM donor dollars? 	<p>1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X3 Max Score: 15</p>		
PROPOSED ENROLLMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT			
<p>Tracking Outcomes/ Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the program serving enough people for the amount they are requesting? Is the enrollment process effectively explained? Do the methods and tools used for tracking program progress seem effective and reliable? 	<p>1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X2 Max Score: 10</p>		
OVERALL			
<p>Overall Application Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the applicant effectively communicate why the funds are needed, what the program will accomplish, and how funds would be spent? 	<p>1 2 3 4 5 Weight: X2 Max Score:10</p>		
TOTAL SCORE			

2025-2026 Catalogue of Indicators

The following tables list the measured indicators for each eligible program strategy. Indicators designated as “Required” must be reported by all agencies associated with that strategy. Innovation and Competitive level requests will be required to select an additional number of “Elective” indicators based on the strategy(ies) selected. *If your program aligns with an eligible strategy but not the indicators listed, please contact Will Price (wprice@uway.org).*

Ensuring a Strong Safety Net

Ind. #	Req. for applications	Food Insecurity
1	Required	Individuals screened for additional basic needs and referred to other agencies for additional community programs.
2	Elective	Individuals participate in nutrition program.

Ind. #	Req. for applications	Healthcare
1	Required	Clients have a medical home.
2	Elective	Clients positively change health status in one or more areas: oral health, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity.

Ind. #	Req. for applications	Behavioral Healthcare
1	Required	Clients have metrics that are captured across multiple areas of individuals’ functioning, symptoms, and treatment experience at baseline and after treatment has begun.
2	Elective	Clients make measurable behavior changes (participate in programs to prevent or reduce depression, anxiety symptoms, or substance misuse and/or abuse).
3	Elective	Clients make measurable behavior changes (participate in programs that help them solve problems, regulate emotions, and establish helpful thought and behavior patterns, reduce relapses, and re-admissions to inpatient care or outpatient relapse).

Ind. #	Req. for applications	Housing Services
1	Required (if applicable)	Individuals/households provided shelter (emergency shelter, motel vouchers, and/or homelessness prevention).
2	Required	Individuals/households are placed into permanent housing upon exit.
3	Elective	Individuals make measurable behavior change (e.g. seek needed treatment/care, reconnect with social networks).
4	Elective	Individuals increase income through access to new benefits or employment.

Ind. #	Req. for applications	Home Repair
1	Required	Homes repaired to safe, decent, sanitary standard.
2	Elective	Individuals screened for additional basic needs and referred to other agencies for additional community programs.

Creating Pathways to Resiliency

Ind. #	Req. for applications	Early Education Supports
1	Required	Parents/caregivers demonstrate knowledge about their child’s learning and development.
2	Elective	Parents read to children regularly (4 times a week).
3	Elective	Students improve attitude towards reading and literacy using a reliable measure.

Ind. #	Req. for applications (min. 1 required)	Youth Development and Social Emotional Learning
1	Elective	Students are promoted to the next grade level.
2	Elective	Students demonstrate academic growth in one or more core subject areas.
3	Elective	Students demonstrate measurable behavior changes (improved in-school attendance, improved school disciplinary record, involvement in extracurricular activities and/or mentoring opportunities, etc.).
4	Elective	Students participate in career exploration program(s)

Ind. #	Req. for applications	Workforce Development
1	Required	Adults complete job training programs.
2	Elective	Adults increase their employment income and/or improved benefits through employment.

Ind. #	Req. for applications	Financial Education
1	Required	Individuals make measurable behavior change (increase credit score, reducing debt, reducing interest rate on debt, or improving terms of repayment).