



United Way of the  
Greater Capital Region

# *Building a Bigger We*

2024-2026 Focused Investment Fund

UWGCR believes in a thriving Capital Region. A region that celebrates the distinctiveness of its peoples, geographies, cultures, and histories. A region that knows its residents are its source of strength and invests equitably in the present and future of each one of us. A region in which each of us not only has the opportunity to make our own choices but the freedom to *create* our own choices. A region where we honor the agency, self-determination, and human rights with which we are each and all of us born.

This vision is aspirational. Examples abound in every community in the Capital Region that are symptoms of deeply rooted problems of inequality, injustice, and exclusion. To make this vision real we must build power and transform existing narratives of who is deserving of assistance, who gets to make important decisions, and what values will guide us moving forward.

It is difficult to build power in community, when so many are burdened by unmet basic needs and unfulfilled rights to health, education, food, housing, quality jobs, and wellbeing. 38 percent of Capital Region residents cannot afford a budget that reflects their most basic needs. Despite working, often 2-3 jobs, 440 thousand households across the Region struggle to make ends meet. This is ALICE- Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. ALICE data shows the growing and glaring gap between what people earn and the true cost of living. Where one lives ought not to dictate a person's opportunities in life. Yet, ALICE data clearly shows a consistent growth in ALICE for households in certain zip codes and census tracts. ALICE makes clear how poverty, and all of its ensuing negative impacts, is a structural and systemic problem, not an individual problem, or bad decisions people make regarding their health, education, or economic wellbeing. It requires systemic solutions driven by communities.

United Way is committed to creating the conditions in which ALICE households in the Capital Region move away from crisis and to a position of thriving. The Focused Investments are United Way's largest responsive investment platform, intended to support community-driven solutions to meeting ALICE's needs and rights right now. Our aim is to invest in those community-based organizations whose efforts shore up ALICE's agency as a strategy to build a robust, resilient democracy for the many not just the few.



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We are looking for organizations who equitably, effectively, and sustainably meet individuals' and families' immediate basic needs in education, health, and economic well-being. We are looking for organizations that uplift and build power for and with ALICE. Priorities within these areas are described below. Investments will be made to sustain or scale successful practices.

Our grant-making is guided by the following principles:

- Equity: We prioritize strategies that will result in greater [equity and inclusion](#).
- Collaboration: We support approaches that bring together partners for greater impact.
- Systems-change: We seek to demonstrate innovative solutions that make institutional practices and policies more effective, efficient and just.
- Data-driven and evidence-informed: We use evaluation inform our learning and deepen our approach and strategy. We are looking for organizations who do the same.
- Learning, evaluation, and communication: We are committed to learning with and from our grantees in a way that leads to transparent, intentional, and meaningful change.

For Focused Investment partners, UWGCR is looking for organizations that:

- Center the self-determination and agency of every individual;
- Are focused on those zip codes/ census tracts/ streets where ALICE is concentrated;
- Are willing and able to share data to contribute to a co-created plan for change;
- Focus on what's working rather than what's missing, lacking, or broken;
- Remain continuously curious, respectful, and humble; and
- Embrace difference and diversity as a vital community resource.

## GENERAL ELEGIBILITY

All non-profit 501(c)(3) agencies that include a focus on health, education and economic well-being that service the 8- county area of the Greater Capital District (Albany, Columbia, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie) may apply for funding, subject to meeting general United Way requirements. By submitting an



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application, you certify that your organization can provide the following documentation at any time during the course of the selection process: • Proof of 501(c)(3) status; • audited, reviewed or unaudited financial statements for its prior fiscal year as required by New York State Charities regulations • List of current Board of Directors and their affiliation.

Priority will go to those organizations that have received less than \$35,000 from UWGCR in the last year.

### APPLICATION FRAMEWORK

The 2024 Focused Investments incorporate two aligned but separate opportunities: Bedrock Investments and Hammerstone Partners.

To be considered for investment, all eligible organizations must complete the Bedrock application (Section I).

In addition, we are soliciting Letters of Interest (LOI) for a select number of partners (up to 7) interested in collaborating more deeply with us on outcome change: Hammerstone Partners. Completing the LOI is optional and has no bearing on an organization's consideration for Bedrock funding. See Section II for information on Hammerstone Partners.

### GRANT SIZE, DURATION, AND DELIVERABLES

**Bedrock Investments are \$30,000 over 24 months. Disbursements will be made quarterly. All UWGCR funds are unrestricted and may be used for programmatic costs and/or operational costs. To be considered for funding, an agency **must fully complete this application and submit by: April 30, 2024.****

**The grant period will begin July 1, 2024 and payments will be disbursed quarterly.**

Grantees funded under this effort will be expected to engage in the activities and provide the specific deliverables listed below:

1. Consistent Communications with UWGCR;
2. Collection and reporting of data as per the UWGCR's Collaborative Learning Results Framework (see appendix)
3. Annual reports that include program updates, reflections, data, and accounts for financial expenditures that captures a clear assessment of the impact of the work.

More detailed instructions for reporting will be provided to successful recipients.



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## EVALUATION PROCESS

We will not be able to fund all worthwhile applications. Funding decisions will be based on the evaluation criteria referenced above with heavy emphasis on documented program performance and the ability to assist UWGCR in achieving results. UWGCR has made available the weighting of each question in the Request for Proposal (RFP). Applicants should allocate their time answering accordingly. If applications clearly do not fit the identified need and performance outcomes desired, UWGCR staff reserves the right to declare the application not in alignment and will not forward for scoring. Applications are scored out of 100 total points.

A community evaluation model is central to how UWGCR allocates funds. Our review committee is made up of a diverse group of volunteers who reflect our diverse communities. They bring with them lived experience expertise and expertise in the thematic areas prioritized.

## KEY DATES

March 20	Request for Proposals
March & April	RFP Zoom Open Office Hours Visit our <a href="#">website</a> for the link
April 23	Deadline for Hammerstone Partners
April 30	Deadline for Bedrock Investments
May	Review of applications
June 3-7	Interviews for select Hammerstone
June 30	Communication of all results
July	Virtual Onboarding for partners
September	Submit plan for data collection and reporting to UWGCR
November	Story of Impact Year One
June 2025	Year One report
November 2025	Story of Impact Year Two
June 2026	Year Two Report



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*APPLICATION: Section One Bedrock Investment*

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**I. AGENCY INFORMATION**

1. Agency Name
2. Name, Email, Phone of Executive Director(s)
3. Grant completed by:
  - a. Name, Email, Phone Number
4. Primary Contact should this be awarded<sup>1</sup>:
  - a. Name, Email, Phone Number
5. Agency Address: street, city, county, zip
6. Geographic location(s) of programming for this grant
  - a. List cities and/or towns
  - b. List counties
7. Is your organization incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization with tax exempt status? Yes/ No. (skip 8)
  - a. EIN #
8. If your organization is not a 501c3 do you have a fiscal sponsor? Yes/ no. (if no to 7 and 8, move to page that they're ineligible).
  - a. Yes: Name of fiscal sponsor
9. How long has your organization been incorporated and in operation?
10. How representative of the communities you serve is your staff and leadership?
  - a. Highly (>80%)
  - b. Mostly (50-79%)
  - c. Somewhat (25-49%)
  - d. Not very (<25%)
11. How representative of the communities you serve is your board?
  - a. Highly (>80%)
  - b. Mostly (50-79%)
  - c. Somewhat (25-49%)
  - d. Not very (<25%)
12. What is your organization's total budget size?

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<sup>1</sup> This will be the person United Way staff will contact about grant forms, upcoming events as well as reporting. If you have more than one person in your organization who fits these categories, please designate one person who will be responsible to making sure all people in your organization are notified for specific grant needs.



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- a. >\$10 million
- b. Between \$5-10 million
- c. Between \$1-5 million
- d. <\$1mn
- e. <\$500,000
- f. <\$100,000

### Demographics of Leadership

It is important to us that our grant processes are accessible, inclusive, and equitable and that our funding decisions align with our commitment to equitably fund those organizations and communities most negatively impacted by our current health, education, and financial systems. The following demographic questions are entirely optional, but your answers help us to ensure that various identities are represented in our process.

13. Which of the following best represents the organization's CEO/ Executive Director?

- a. African-American or Black
- b. American Indian or Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian
- c. Asian, Asian-American or Pacific Islander
- d. Latina, Latino, LatinX or Hispanic
- e. White/Caucasian
- f. Middle Eastern
- g. Multiracial
- h. I prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- i. I prefer to not specify

14. Which of the following best represents the gender identity of the organization's CEO/ Executive Director?

- a. Female
- b. Gender fluid
- c. Male
- d. Multigender
- e. Non-binary



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- f. I prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- g. I do not have a specific descriptor for my gender identity
- h. I prefer to not specify

## II. PROGRAMMING

We focus our funding in 3 areas listed below. These priority areas are grounded in insights gained from 3 years of collaborative learning with over 75 funded partners across the Capital Region. Please apply under only one.

We understand that these social, economic, and environmental goals are interlinked. We know that communities are at the forefront of the climate crisis. As a systemic issue, the climate crisis is further exacerbated by continued income inequality, accelerated (and uneven) environmental degradation, and risks of global pandemics like COVID-19. ALICE households and the communities in which ALICE is disproportionately represented bear the brunt of climate crisis. For this same reason, ALICE families must be at the center of decision-making, discussion, and planning to deepen our community climate leadership and accelerate positive impact. Where appropriate, we encourage applicants to include in their responses how their work contributes to community resilience, possibly shoring up protective community factors.

1. Please indicate for which focus area and priorities you are seeking funding.

- a. **Education**

- i. Improve youth mental health.
    - ii. Strengthen childhood (0-18) development, literacy and STEAM skills. Childhood development is inclusive of health & nutrition, enrichment, and protection, and the whole family unit (e.g., programs for parents, children and/or caregivers that focus on supporting/strengthening the family).

- b. **Economic Wellbeing**

- i. Enhance workforce development for the “whole” worker, taking into consideration challenges related to unmet social determinants of health and benefits cliffs.
    - ii. Promote financial inclusion and asset-building for ALICE.



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**c. Health and Well-being**

- i. Improve women's health, inclusive of all who identify as women, as it relates to sexual and reproductive health rights and maternal health and access to dignified health services.
- ii. Advance nutritional security.

**2. Change Agent (20 points)**

- a. What is the positive change to which your work contributes? (Max 5 sentences. This description will be used by UWGCR to describe your work should you be selected).
- b. On what strengths, accomplishments and talents of your organization and community does your proposal build?

**3. Proposed Solution (20 points)**

- a. Share your proposed program design including strategies, key activities, and anticipated timeline.

**4. Community (10 points)**

- a. Please include those zip codes of the majority of the people who participate in your program(s).
- b. How do you engage with your community in the design and/or evaluation of your work?

**5. Collaborative Learning & Reporting (20 pts)**

United Way has worked and learned with partners over the last three grant cycles to build our Collaborative Learning Results Framework. Our Focused Investment priorities have been selected through this process and the indicators we have chosen to measure our collective progress have been informed by our 70+partner organizations. Every selected applicant will be asked to contribute data (qualitative and quantitative) to our learning framework under the priority area to which they applied. Should your application be awarded, you will be asked to submit a more detailed Outcome Reporting Plan in September.

In this section, please explain:





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- a. For this program, what does success look like? Please include your goals and anticipated outcomes. What is the timeframe you are thinking about when you define your success?
- b. Select your focus area. The dropdown will provide indicators from our Collaborative Learning Results Framework. Next to each applicable indicator, please provide what you anticipate achieving in year one (i.e... numeric value).
- a) In addition to our Collaborative Learning Results Framework, what other indicators/data relevant to this program do you collect? Please provide concrete examples.

### III. Organizational Overview

1. Please share why your organization is well poised to lead this work. Describe the external research and/or industry specific best practices your organization has adopted to enhance your effectiveness at reaching your stated goal. (10 points)
2. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are of integral importance to the UWGCR. We understand that building an organization centered on equity is an ongoing process, not something that will be achieved at a particular moment in time and endure without attentiveness and effort. We understand that how an organization thinks about diversity will depend on the geographic region in which it is working. Context matters especially for recognizing who is/has been marginalized and how that manifests in different communities, organizations, programs and among staff. But marginalization itself is universal and social exclusion is relevant everywhere.(10pts)
  - a. How does your organization proactively promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity in your work? *Please do not simply cut and paste your organization's DEI statement.*
  - b. How does the proposed program address equity for participants?



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#### IV. PROJECTED PROGRAM BUDGET

For this section, please provide information on the focus area in which you are applying (e.g., Education, Health, Economic Wellbeing). If your organization has multiple program areas, you do not need to include that financial data.

Under the Revenue section, please provide all sources of revenue for the focus area you are applying for.

Under the expense section, please indicate under which categories you will be allocating the **United Way grant funding**.

You will be asked to provide budget details for each program year (i.e., Year 1 and Year 2). The grant awards will be for the same amount each year (\$15,000).

Projected Program Budget	Year 1	Year 2
Budget Time Period: July 1, 2024-June 30, 2026	Jul 1 '24- Jun 30 '25	Jul 1 '25- Jun 30 '26
<b>REVENUE</b>		
United Way Request for new funding		
Government Funding		
Other donations/grants (corporations, foundations, individuals, etc.)		
Client Fees		
Other funding		
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>		
	Jul 1 '24- Jun 30 '25	Jul 1 '25- Jun 30 '26
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
<b>Operational</b>		
Salaries and Related Expenses		
Professional Fees/Contract Services		
National Dues/Support		
<b>Programmatic</b>		
Program Related Expenses		
Assistance to Individuals (stipends, vouchers, etc.)		
Transportation, Supplies, Materials		



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All Other Expenses		
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>		

1. Explain your budget for this request. Provide a detailed description of how you plan to spend United Way funding, either through operational or programmatic support. How do you distinguish that in your agency? If you are using funding for personnel costs, please include the number and their role(s) in this explanation.
2. Describe the Program Related Expenses entered on the Program Budget Form.
3. Describe any expenses entered in the Assistance to Individuals Line Item on the Program Budget Form.
4. Please describe how this grant enables your organization to leverage other grants. Write N/A if not applicable.

#### V. Additional Information

In addition to the written application, applicants are invited to submit a video, 3-5 minute maximum. We know that it is difficult to communicate all that you are doing via a written document and for this reason invite you add to that with the video. The video will not be scored. In the video please do not repeat information already included in the written application.



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*APPLICATION: Section II Hammerstone Partners (optional)*

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## Hammerstone Partner

We know that creating and sustaining the conditions for all households across the Greater Capital Region to thrive is about fundamentally transforming the systems that are keeping people impoverished. It is about ensuring that basic rights of food, shelter, health, education, dignified work and wages, quality lived environment for every community member.

Each of the UWGCR focus area priorities were chosen because we consider them to be a bellwether for wellbeing in the Greater Capital Region. Woven together with Bedrock Investments, we have created a parallel investment partnership grounded in deeper relationship and collaborative systems learning. Our goal is to build collective power that leads to shifting narratives and changed conditions. We are calling this parallel investment **Hammerstone Partners** in reference to the oldest, simplest tool we think humankind has- curiosity. It is the spark of curiosity that drives innovation, challenges dominate narratives, and transforms systems.

What we are looking for in an Hammerstone Partner:

- A systems perspective in your work. While you might be focused on immediate, basic needs and rights within your community, you are also laying the foundation and/or are actively engaged in upstream work that has the potential to fundamentally transform the conditions now and/or in the future.
- A vision and plan for how you can get there; what levers of opportunity exist and how you can influence them.
- Dedicated partners and staff that have the knowledge, experience, and passion to make this work happen.
- An adaptive management and learning approach: questioning, testing, and feeding that knowledge back into the change work.
- Willingness to collaborate with United Way on outcome-based learning. By this we mean co-creating a learning plan with us (inclusive of developing outcome measures, data collection and reporting). We don't expect every partner to have elaborate evaluation or data collection systems, rather we look for a willingness



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and curiosity to create space and time within your work and engage with us on outcome measures and data that helps answer the question: How might we fundamentally change the condition of \_\_\_\_\_ so that individuals will experience \_\_\_\_\_ and have what they need to thrive.

- Understanding what works in your community might not be the roadmap for every community, but you are committed to working with us to distill and share essential elements, signals and/or outcomes so that others doing this work in the Greater Capital Region can learn with us.

We know too often that community-based organizations are asked to do the impossible with the miniscule. We know the tension between pausing for learning and the pace of implementation. What we are committing to with Hammerstone Partners:

- Increased investment (grant) award, up to \$70,000 over two years (24 months);
- Time and resources to co-create the learning plan, outcome measures and/or data collection & analysis tools;
- Time and space for learning conversations that are not “extra” but part of your work;
- Support to elevating your work across all our networks;
- Option to join the Data, Reporting and Learning Community of Practice for the For Impact Sector in the Greater Capital Region.

### **Consideration for Hammerstone Investment**

For United Way, Hammerstone is an opportunity to lean deep into our partnership experiences and our understanding of what meaningful partnership for change can look like. At this time, United Way will only consider applications for Hammerstone Partners from organizations that we have had a previous funding relationship with over the past four years (2019-2023) across any of our grant investments. Family Neighborhood Resource Centers are ineligible.

To be considered for a Hammerstone Partner Investment you must submit a Letter of Intent along with your focused investment proposal by April 23, 2024. Letters will be reviewed and if you are selected you will be notified by May 10, 2024. If you are selected, you will be asked to join us for an interview during the week of June 3, 2024. Award determinations for Hammerstone Partners will be made at the same time as Bedrock Investments. If you are not selected for the Hammerstone Partner investment,



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your application will be automatically considered during the Bedrock Investment review process for \$30,000 grant (over 24 months).

Below we have included information on what information is needed in the letter of intent as well as general information for the interview should you be selected. Specific interview details (e.g. dates, times, questions) will be shared with each selected applicant.

We will be funding up to seven (7) Hammerstone Partners.

### **Letter Of Intent**

Please submit a letter of intent through the Survey Monkey Apply platform. Letters can be in Word or PDF format and *should be no longer than 2 pages*. Your letter of intent should include the following information:

1. Why are you excited about participating in this partnership model with United Way?
2. How does your work contribute to changing the conditions for people to thrive?
3. How is your work as outlined in Section 1 of the application building power in your community? How do you see that power manifesting?
4. Within your program and/or organization what are your ideas to create time and space for outcome reflections, data collection and analysis? How do you hope to engage with United Way and other Hammerstone partners in outcome-based learning?

Final Selection: A select number of applicants who submit a LOI will be invited to a final-stage interview during the week of June 3<sup>rd</sup>. More details to follow for those who have been selected.