

United Way of Whatcom County



Got Questions? We have answers!

Why should I give to the United Way Community Impact Fund and not directly to an individual charity?

Three main reasons:

- 1.) 100% of your donation stays local to help Whatcom County individuals and families
- 2.) Programs are vetted and dollars are allocated according to community goals and needs
- 3.) Your dollars are combined with everyone else's dollars to make a greater impact

If your company matches you, you get even more bang for the buck! When we all give together, United Way funded programs can get much bigger checks— and make a much bigger difference.

No one agency can do it all. A family in need may be turning to several programs for support. Giving to United Way's Community impact fund allows you to give to a comprehensive network of vetted programs and agencies all at once, stretching your dollars even further.

All United Way donations are raised *by* our community *for* our community, and it's local community members who determine how the resulting dollars are invested *in* our community.

Did you know? You can be part of the process on all levels! Want to help decide how donated dollars are spent? [Volunteer for our Community Impact Panel](#). You'll hear from every program that is requesting funding and make some really tough but rewarding decisions about where community dollars are most needed and how they should be spent.

What about overhead costs? Should I be concerned?

This is very a common question for nonprofits. Why? Because people care deeply about the causes they give to and want to make sure they are making a maximum impact with their dollars. This makes perfect sense. Unfortunately, judging an organization based on their overhead percentage doesn't.

In the for-profit world, overhead is readily accepted as the cost of doing business, and very few people ask what a company's overhead is when making a purchase. Imagine asking your waitress about overhead before deciding whether or not to "invest" in your lunch. Sounds odd, doesn't it? Now, imagine trying to do your job with little to no budget for office, staff, technology or other every day expenses. How much would you be able to accomplish? How long would it take you?

United Way of Whatcom County's investment in infrastructure (overhead) is approximately 18%. This investment allows us to hire a dedicated, long-term staff (5 employees), maintain an office, comply with audits and other financial oversight, and fund over 30 community-based programs doing amazing work that affects thousands of lives each year, right here in Whatcom County.

Did you know? United Way of Whatcom County has a Platinum rating on [GuideStar](#) and a 4 star rating on [Charity Navigator](#), two top charity watchdog groups.

I want to give to a particular partner agency. Can I do that?

The short answer is yes. While most people donate to the Community Impact Fund, you have the option to designate a portion of your donation to a particular nonprofit agency.

Depending on which organization you choose:

- Your donation may not stay local
- The agency may not go through our vetting process
- Instead of benefitting specific programs, funds can be used however the organization sees fit

If you choose this route, you will be giving *through* United Way, but not *to* United Way. Only gifts to the United Way Community Impact Fund go through our vigorous vetting process, so you know exactly where and how they will be used.

Things to note:

- The nonprofit you choose must be a qualified 501(c)(3)
- There is a minimum donation of \$100 required

Did you know? 100% of United Way Community Impact Fund donations support a network of agencies helping your friends and neighbors right here in Whatcom County.

I live in the county. How does United Way help support my friends and neighbors?

Great question! There's a reason we're called United Way of Whatcom County. We are dedicated to serving everyone in our community, and are always looking for ways to grow and expand our reach. We are working with a variety of programs that serve areas all over the county. Here are some great things happening in the County:

- WELA's Kaleidoscope Play & Learn groups are held throughout Whatcom County
- Early Learning programs through the Whatcom Family YMCA
- Home visits for children with developmental delays from Whatcom Center for Early Learning
- Food storage and distribution at county food banks via the Bellingham Food Bank
- Community Showers Program at all YMCA locations
- Child abuse prevention and parenting services through Brigid Collins
- Literacy Tutoring for Adults program through the Whatcom Literacy Council
- Prescription Drug Discount program through FamilyWize available at county pharmacies
- Food delivery services for homebound seniors through Meals on Wheels
- GRADS program for pregnant and parenting teens for any Whatcom County student
- Support services for children experiencing trauma through Rebound

- Compass Health CORS outreach services for behavioral health are offered county-wide
- Domestic violence and sexual assault prevention services through DVSAS
- Support for homeless families through Interfaith Coalition's Family Promise program
- Futures NW academic assistance for underserved students in all Whatcom County school districts

Did you know? 1 in 4 Whatcom County residents benefit from at least one United Way funded program each year. How many people do you know? Chances are you've helped a lot of them!

I don't see my favorite organization on the list of funded programs. What happened?

It's possible the organization you're looking for may not have applied for funding this year. Perhaps they found new funding sources or are shifting their programs to different areas of impact.

Our grant process is open to any nonprofit organization working to help Whatcom County individuals and families who are struggling financially. Decisions about which programs to fund aren't easy. Our Community Impact Panel carefully evaluates each request to determine if and how a particular program fits into our goals, what the long-term outcomes are, and what level of funding we can provide. As a result, the list of programs and agencies we fund will change from year to year, depending on community needs and priorities.

United Way is constantly striving to find, support, and invest in the best long-term solutions to bring people out of poverty and into healthier, more stable situations. We truly believe this benefits not just those we help, but all of us as a community.

Did you know? Any 501(c)(3) agency working on issues related to basic needs, economic mobility, and reducing the cycle of poverty can apply for United Way funding. The more money we raise, the more great programs we can support!

How much of my money stays in Whatcom County?

All of it! United Way is the largest nonprofit in America, but each United Way is separate and focuses solely on their community. Only programs operating locally are eligible for funding from United Way of Whatcom County. We believe in creating strong neighborhoods and communities right here at home—where we live, work, and play.

Did you know? United Way is a community driven organization. Local business, organizations and volunteers help raise and distribute dollars invested right here in Whatcom County.