



**United Way of Whatcom County
LOOKING AHEAD**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-2027**

UNITED FOR THE FUTURE

CONTINUING OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The past few years have put our community to the test. The pandemic challenged us on every level. Not only did it put our collective health at risk, it exacerbated financial inequities and reinforced our need for a community safety net of services and systems we can rely on during times of struggle.

According to local ALICE data, approximately 1 in 3 Whatcom County households were struggling to make ends meet before Covid hit. In 2022, a subsequent ALICE report titled "The Pandemic Divide" confirmed what we feared. Individuals and families who were already struggling prior to the pandemic were hit much harder by its effects. From job loss to housing instability to food insecurity, folks who were barely getting by before now found themselves facing dire situations with compounded challenges.

In the spring of 2020, United Way partner agencies began reporting record-setting rises in demand for services and huge increases in the need for programs and funding. Three years later, our local nonprofits are still experiencing unprecedented levels of clients seeking help. As always, we are working to be part of the solution.

United Way of Whatcom County has been stepping up to strengthen our community, in good times and bad, for over 65 years. Through our locally-driven fundraising and grantmaking efforts, United Way has been working to lift up our friends and neighbors and enable financial stability for every person in Whatcom County. And we can't stop now. This work is too important, and there is much more to be done.

The dollars we raise and invest are changing lives for the better every day. Our vision for the future is to keep building on that positive change until we live in a world where it is no longer needed. Our strategic focus for the next five years will be on expanding our reach and resources so we can make an even greater impact. We hope you will join us in this work.



Kristi Birkeland, President/CEO
United Way of Whatcom County



MISSION

Unite with a network of local businesses, nonprofits, and community stakeholders to enable financial stability for every person in Whatcom County.

VISION

Fostering communities where all families and individuals have opportunity to thrive.

VALUES



Community

Everything we do, from how we raise funds to where we invest them, is an act of community. We strive to think and act with a community-first lens in every aspect of our work.

Trust/Integrity/Responsibility

Trust and integrity are at the core of our work. Our supporters trust us to steward their generous donations well. Likewise, we trust our vetted partners to put the funds we give them to good use.

Teamwork

We can't do this work alone. Teamwork means showing up, working hard, and collaborating. It means bringing diverse groups of people together to achieve common goals that lift us all up. From donors, volunteers, and community partners to staff and board members, teamwork is the driver of our success.

Gratitude

Thanks never goes without saying. We are so grateful for our incredible staff and board, generous donors, wonderful partners, dedicated volunteers, and amazing sponsors for Living United and making what we do possible.

Compassion

We recognize that we don't have all the answers and strive to view every interaction generously and humbly. We listen first, care deeply, and approach our work selflessly.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2023-27

Strategic planning is critical to achieving big things, but for us, it's more than that. It's putting our values in action and bringing our dreams to life.

We are committed to putting our Whatcom County friends and neighbors on the path toward financial stability. The issues are complex, and the solutions are multi-faceted, but that's okay. We're in it for the long haul.

To maximize our collective impact, both now and into the future, we will be focusing on:

DEEPENING DONOR RELATIONSHIPS & ENHANCING SUPPORT OPTIONS

A United group of people that are part of something bigger than themselves can make amazing things happen.

We have fantastic donors, and we want to make sure they feel as inspired by us as we do by them. Our priorities in this area include redesigning our Leadership Giving program, engaging with supporters in new ways as they retire out of workplace giving, and developing new and easy avenues for people to give non-cash assets and make legacy gifts. We will also continue to thank the heck out of all of our donors, advocates, and volunteers!

Corresponding Values: Community | Trust/Integrity/Responsibility | Gratitude

PROVIDING COMMUNITY EDUCATION & AWARENESS

If folks don't know about the issues in our community, how can they possibly be inspired to jump in and help?

When we provide ALICE statistics and information about people who are struggling in Whatcom County, we help bring understanding and empathy. When we tell stories about the amazing work being supported by United Way, we help our donors see why their gifts are so important, and feel good about the difference they're making. Education on community issues and impact keeps donors engaged with the work they are making possible.

Corresponding Values: Community | Trust/Integrity/Responsibility | Teamwork | Compassion

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

Each donor is on a unique giving journey. When there are opportunities to Live United at every step, we all win.

Charitable giving can be extremely personal. Often, there are painful stories or memories behind the generosity. Sometimes, it can be a form of healing. Many of our supporters prefer to give quietly and/or remain anonymous. By offering a variety of giving methods and understanding individual needs and preferences, we can interact with donors in meaningful ways. Wherever they are, whenever they're ready, and however they want to give.

Corresponding Values: Community | Trust/Integrity/Responsibility | Gratitude

EXPANDING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS & COLLECTIVE IMPACT

When we expand our thinking and our reach, we expand our capacity to make positive change in the world.

United Way and workplace campaigns have been synonymous for a very long time. This was our niche, and we excelled at it. But the world is changing, and we must change with it. To continue delivering on the collective impact work we're known for, we'll work to diversify our partnerships and funding streams. Our collaborative nature will serve us well as we explore new relationships, fundraising models, and programs, including increased support for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library as it becomes a key program in building literacy in our community.

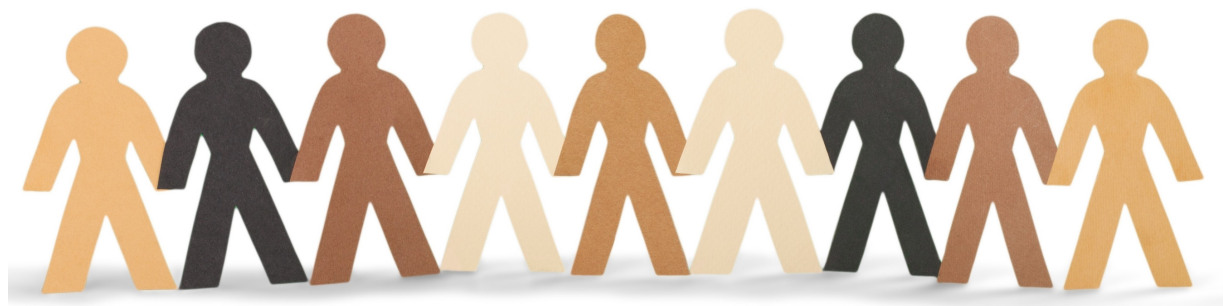
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UNITED FOR EQUITY

Underlying all of our strategic initiatives is our dream to build a community where everyone has a chance to not just survive, but thrive. In doing this work, we recognize that many historically excluded groups have not had equal access to the tools, resources, and opportunities they need to become financially secure.

As we work to break cycles of poverty in Whatcom County, we do so with careful intent to lift up communities that continue to experience increased barriers and challenges. We believe that everyone who lives here deserves the chance to reach their full potential. And when that happens, we all win.

This is why we Live United.



What is Equity?

Equity is the intentional inclusion of everyone in society. Equity is achieved when systemic, institutional, and historical barriers based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other identities are dismantled and no longer predict socioeconomic, education and health outcomes.

Equity Statement

We recognize that structural racism and other forms of oppression have contributed to persistent disparities which United Way seeks to dismantle. Our United Way network strives to engage community members, especially those whose voices have traditionally been marginalized. We work with individuals, nonprofits, public and private partners to find and support solutions to ensure everyone has the resources, opportunities and networks they need to thrive.

At United Way of Whatcom County, we oppose all forms of racism and discrimination and commit to leveraging our assets (convening, strategic investments, awareness building, and advocacy) to create more equitable communities.