

## **United Way Grant Process for FY 2025-26**

The grant process for FY 2025-26 will be an open application in coordination with the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County Government. Each organization has their own grant timeline and process but share a common portion of the grant application to ease the burden for nonprofits applying for funding from multiple sources. The common application was co-created several years ago in partnership with the City of Bellingham and United Way of Whatcom County. This is the first year that the County is participating.

Our approach for FY 2025-26 will be a blend of old and new processes. We are excited to bring back volunteer panels and will implement a plan that is realistic and achievable for UWWC staff and Board and more accessible for volunteers. This will require fewer, more focused sessions. We will continue with process changes and enhancements that were implemented in recent years, including staff recommendations regarding goal alignment and funding amounts, and providing multi-year funding and grant extensions.

This year's approach has 3 phases and will begin with an initial round of open funding requests via the common application, which will be posted and available on our website by Friday, Dec. 13, with a due date of January 16. No additional documents will be required at this time. Applicants must demonstrate alignment with our core focus areas, which remain the same: Basic Needs, Economic Mobility, Breaking the Cycle of Poverty, and serving the ALICE population. UWWC staff will review applications and meet with the Community Impact Committee (CIC) to discuss in late January or early February, depending on the number of applications. At this time, UWWC staff will make recommendations regarding which applicants fall into the following categories:

1. Current partners with clear mission alignment to receive grant extensions. *Select agencies will be asked to provide additional financial documents and information but will not need to complete the phase two application process.*
2. Current or potential new partners with clear mission alignment to advance to phase two of the application process. *These agencies will be asked to complete the addendum questions, submit additional financial documents and information, and meet with staff/CIC if/as requested.*
3. Programs that do not align with our mission or whose applications aren't as strong or compelling. *These agencies will be notified they did not make it through the process.*

After reaching consensus with the CIC, UWWC staff will notify applicants in each category and follow up with next steps. Agencies selected to continue with the process will be provided with the addendum application questions and requirements in February, with a due date TBD in March.

Once Phase 2 applications have been submitted, UWWC staff and CIC will review and determine which applicants will advance to Phase 3 – Volunteer Panels

A total of 3 volunteer panels (6-8 volunteers each) will participate in a series of 3 half-day meetings in April and May. One orientation session (to include all panel members) and 2 deliberation meetings for each individual panel. If needed, a final session with representatives from each panel will be held to determine final grant recommendations across all panels.

## **FY 2025-26 Grant Summary, Timeline & Details**

- Phase 1 – Every applicant must fill out the common app (post on our website)
  - Post app by Dec 13. Apps due Jan 16.
  - Promote in newsletter and in a social post
- UWWC makes initial determination of who is and is not a good fit
- UWWC staff selects a number of current partners for continued 2 year grant funding
  - Documents will be required (audit, budget, financials, etc.)
  - A sub-section of these agencies may be asked to present program goals and outcomes to staff/volunteers at panel orientation
- Meet with CIC (Lisa, John, Natalie) regarding staff recommendations for who makes it through to the next round - February
- Notify those who did not make the next round.
- Phase 2 – UWWC invites all those who made it through (and did not get an extension) to fill out the addendum and provide additional required documents. (February)
- Staff and CIC to discuss recommendations for which agencies advance to phase 3 (March)
- Phase 3 – Volunteer Panels (April-May)
  - Three groups of 6 - 8 volunteers to evaluate no more than 8 applications each. Applications will be grouped by focus areas or other similarities
  - Orientation Day with visits or presentations from currently funded agencies, education about community issues, and instructions/orientation regarding the process. (Half day in April)
  - Schedule two subsequent follow up meetings with each group (April/May) for deliberation and decision making on funding and amounts
    - Staff recommendations and guidance will be provided
    - Large conf room reserved Mon | Tue | Wed from April 21<sup>st</sup> - May 14<sup>th</sup>
    - If needed: host an additional meeting at the end of May with representatives from each panel, UWWC staff and CIC to determine final funding recommendations to the Board.
- Final funding recommendations to be made by June 1, pending any adjustments based on budget and revenue numbers.