



WHATCOM COUNTY
**HEALTH AND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**



UNITED WAY
Whatcom County

2025 Community Impact Grants Common Application

PART A: COVER PAGE

Please fill out this form completely. Note that individual funding agencies have specific grant requirements and will require supplemental materials. Please check the agency website below for details.

To which source are you applying?

- City of Bellingham’s Housing or Human/Social Services NOFA:
<https://cob.org/services/housing/funding-opportunities-2/partnerships-funding>
- United Way of Whatcom County’s Community Impact Fund:
<https://www.unitedwaywhatcom.org/help-for-organizations/>
- Whatcom County Health and Community Services:
<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/Bids.aspx>

Agency Contact Information:

Agency Name: Sun Community Service
 DBA (if applicable): Click here to enter text.
 EIN: 910986916 UEID (from SAM.gov): JK48XSNG76X5
 Mailing address: 515 E Chestnut St, Bellingham WA 98225
 Website: suncommunityservice.org
 General phone: 360-392-1324
 State of Washington Business License Number(s): 054960

Executive Director (or authorized representative):

Name: Hannah Osborne
 Title (if not ED): Click here to enter text.
 Email: suncommunityservice@outlook.com
 Phone: 360-599-8207

Application Contact (If different):

Name: Click here to enter text.
 Title: Click here to enter text.
 Email: Click here to enter text.
 Phone: Click here to enter text.

Program Information:

Program Name: Sun Community Service- Sun House
 Program Address: 515 E Chestnut St, Bellingham, WA 98225
 Are all program services delivered at this address? Yes No



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Funding Request: The award amount is dependent on the funding organization. Please see individual funder’s supplemental materials for more information about the funds available.

How much funding per year are you requesting for this program?

\$ 35,000

Total Annual Project Budget:

\$ 640,070.00

Annual Organizational Budget:

\$ 640,070.00

PART B: AGENCY INFORMATION

Please limit your responses to no more than two pages for questions 1-5.

1. **Agency Mission.** Please paste or copy your agency’s mission statement below.

Sun Community Service’s mission is to provide a safe and supportive environment for low-income people who are experiencing homelessness and have a diagnosed mental illness. At the center of our work is Sun House, an interim housing facility, where we seek to provide residents with the resources and support needed to stabilize, set goals, and develop the skills needed to meet those goals. We aim to impact homelessness in Whatcom County by providing the space and support that individuals need to prepare for and secure safe and stable housing in our community. We approach our work through a trauma-informed, client-centered approach that centers equity and justice in our organization’s mission and operation.

2. **Agency Beneficiaries.** Briefly describe the intent of your agency’s programs and who primarily benefits from them. Please describe your organization’s impact, specifying the number of beneficiaries or clients served per year and their demographics.

The purpose of Sun Community Service is to provide support, safety, and shelter for people with a diagnosed mental health condition who are also experiencing homelessness in Bellingham, WA. Central to Sun Community Service is Sun House, a 10-bed interim housing facility that provides long-term shelter, meals, medication management, and case management for our residents as well as 24/7 staff support. Residents are referred to our program via Coordinated Entry (or an alternative pathway if ineligible for CE) and complete an intake to begin their stay. Priority is given to individuals engaged in Mental Health Court and/or those exiting institutional settings such as jail/prison, in-patient substance use treatment, mental health crisis centers, hospitals, or release from medical respite care. While residing at Sun House, residents can expect to receive case management, medication support, and life skill building as well as



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provided meals, use of laundry facilities, access to Wi-Fi and phone, and other services with the ultimate goal of moving into housing at the end of their stay. To enter Sun House, residents must be under 50% AMI, have a diagnosed mental health condition, engage with a Sun House case manager or have an external case manager, and maintain their sobriety while at Sun House. The length of stay for a resident at Sun House can range anywhere from 3-5 months, but the standard stay is 90 days.

Sun House has been in operation since 1975 and we have served 2,106 unique individuals and provided over 26,000 nights of stay. In 2024, Sun House provided 1,736 nights of stay to 27 unique individuals, cooked 1,736 meals, and supported 15 out of the 27 residents served into moving into stable housing upon exit from Sun House. Since the creation of our case management program in January 2024, we have increased our housing placement rate from 26.47% in 2023 to 56% in 2024. Beginning January 1, 2025, a second case manager joined the staff to meet the needs of residents who are referred to Sun House from institutional settings or who do not have external case management.

3. **Qualifications and expertise.** Briefly summarize your agency's qualifications and expertise (e.g., years of operation, accreditations, experience of staff members, and number of volunteers). Please mention any recent major organizational changes.

Our organization has been in operation since 1975, originally serving as a boarding house for people with mental illness. In 1997, we transitioned to an interim housing facility for people who were experiencing homelessness with a mental illness, a model that we continue today. Sun Community Service operates two permanent supportive housing facilities in Bellingham, WA with a total of 10 beds available. Part-time case management services are provided to residents of these facilities for the duration of their stay. At the center of Sun Community Service is Sun House, a 10-bed interim housing facility located in Bellingham. Sun House maintains 24/7 staffing and seeks to provide a comfortable and warm environment for people experiencing homelessness so that they can begin to stabilize.

Our staff includes a management team comprised of the Executive Director and Operations Manager. The management team oversees the rest of the staff: (2) Sun House case managers, (1) PSH case manager, (2) overnight residential support staff, and (5) part-time residential support staff. We currently have (6) volunteers, (4) of which are interns from our partnership with Western Washington University.

Our internship program provides a spot for one intern a quarter to be placed at Sun House. Our staff and volunteers are trained in de-escalation, client engagement, medication support, mental health first aid, CPR/first aid, overdose prevention, bias reduction, and DEI in the workplace. Our management and case management staff are trained in the above as well as suicide prevention and intervention, motivational interviewing, and resident relationship building.

Beginning in 2023, Sun Community Service underwent an organizational assessment and restructuring. This resulted in the development of the Operations Manager role and the piloting of a case manager program which began in January 2024. This pilot program was designed to address the observed gap between the support our high need residents require and the resources available to them, a gap that was preventing their progress toward securing housing, but also toward stabilizing health and mental health, maintaining sobriety, and developing critical life skills. Since beginning case management as a pilot



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program at Sun House, we have increased our overall housing placement rates by 56% in 2024, and increased our housing placement rates for residents of color by 33.44%.

4. **Racial Equity and Social Justice.** What steps has your organization taken to address issues of racial equity and social justice within your agency? Which steps are complete, and which are planned or ongoing?

Sun Community Service has designed our intake process to address racial equity and social justice by acknowledging that we are working with marginalized populations who have historically had negative interactions within social work, criminal justice, and healthcare systems. Through Coordinated Entry, we receive prioritized referrals who are the most vulnerable whether due to stigma around mental health, systemic racism or due to lack of resources. We have designed our referral and intake packets to follow a more trauma-informed, culturally competent, and person-first process, acknowledging our experiences working with these marginalized groups.

Since 2022 Sun Community Service has worked to recruit, retain, and promote a staff that represents the clients we serve. Our team now has significant diversity across race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, neurodivergence, veteran status, and experience with homelessness. We provide mandatory training for all staff and volunteers around bias prevention, trauma informed approaches, and DEI in the workplace and social services. We strongly believe that having well-trained and diverse staff at Sun Community Service promotes equity and justice in our organization and in our community as well as creates an environment where clients and residents feel comfortable, represented, and safe.

Sun Community Service remains dedicated to ensuring that all of our policies and procedures are viewed through a DEI lens and we have recently begun the process of updating our training binders, employee hire documents, and resident related paperwork to reflect this. This is an ongoing project that will follow best practices and the most up to date research and recommendations regarding this important work

5. **Agency Funding.** List your organization's most significant funding sources from greatest to least (including the United Way, Whatcom County Health and Community Services and City of Bellingham); dollar amounts are not necessary. Significant funding sources can be defined as sources that make up more than 15% of your program budget. If you have many funding sources, you may list them by category (i.e., federal, state, foundations, individual donors). Please mention any anticipated or recent changes in your future funding or financial position.

1. Whatcom County Health and Community Services
2. City of Bellingham



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PART C: PROGRAM INFORMATION

Please limit your responses to no more than two pages for questions 6-8.

6. **Program Summary.** Briefly summarize the program and its core activities in one or two sentences.

Sun House is a 10 bed interim-housing/emergency shelter program that serves low-income people with a severe mental health diagnosis who are also experiencing homelessness. We provide 24/7 staff support, medication management, shelter, food, case management, and other services to residents. Our goal is to work with community partners and programs to identify and prepare individuals for referral to Sun House, to provide coordinated case management for these individuals while they are residents at Sun House, and support these individuals as they secure and transition into housing opportunities including follow-up support in order to ease the transition into housing and further ensure their success.

7. **Program Purpose.** Identify the community need(s) that the program addresses. What are the measurable outcomes that will result from the services provided?

Homelessness in Whatcom County and nationwide has increased significantly in the last 10 years (WCEH 2023; NAEH 2023). The rising costs of housing paired with strained social services and health systems has contributed significantly to the growing population of individuals experiencing homelessness with diagnosed mental illness locally and nationally (Smith 2021). This highly vulnerable population is more likely to experience chronic homelessness, has some of the highest street mortality rates, and must manage their mental illness without significant institutional support, and have significantly lower rates of exiting homelessness into housing (NAEH 2023; Anderson 2018). To be successful in exiting homelessness into housing, this population needs physical space to stabilize, tailored case management support, and benefits significantly from a case management team approach (Bentson 2015; Pearson et al. 2009).

Sun House has sought to meet the needs of low-income individuals with mental health diagnoses experiencing homelessness in Whatcom County for nearly 50 years. During that time, we have worked in collaboration with community partners toward impacting homelessness, providing a safe and supportive living environment for our community's most vulnerable members, and creating pathways toward stable housing for participants of our programs. Although this work has made a real impact in our community, it has become clear that our organization can and should evolve to better meet the needs of our community.

Beginning in 2024, our program began to provide case management to residents who were referred to Sun House. This case management program was designed to help us meet the capacity benchmarks of our contracts both in terms of referrals, but also to also help us significantly increase our housing



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placement rate. Our case management team has been able to support residents into transitioning straight from Sun House to external stable housing without unnecessary periods of homelessness. Since beginning case management in January 2024, we have increased our overall housing placement rates by 56.2%. This increase is an exciting development, but we believe that further expansion is critical if we want to make a significant contribution to Whatcom County's efforts at ending homelessness.

Sun House provides a safe, secure and comfortable environment for residents to stabilize in with the ultimate goal being to identify, obtain, and move into permanent housing. While residing at Sun House, residents have access to a private room, food (our residential support staff cooks an evening meal every night), laundry facilities, and access to technology such as phones, computers, and wi-fi. Residents often come to us from the street or institutional settings with very few possessions and may have needs that they are unable to fulfill due to a lack of income or support from external programs. Sun House attempts to meet resident needs when it comes to things such as clothing, hygiene products, food, basic needs, and other expenses, but with the rising increase in the cost of goods and services, we find it difficult to support their needs.

Our recent expansion includes the hiring of two case managers which while increasing the number of people that we can reach also includes higher costs to the agency. These expanded costs have been partially covered by the Whatcom County health and Community Services, but the expansion of the program coupled with the rising costs of household goods, foods, utilities, and professional services causes us to seek out additional funding in the amount of \$35,000 in order to continue our work. The recent increase in minimum wage has led us to raise staff wages for retention purposes as well as to ensure that staff are adequately paid for what can be difficult and sometimes emotionally draining work. In addition to an increase in wages, we have noticed across the board increases in the prices of food, utilities, professional services, and basic household goods. A gallon of milk in January 2024 was \$1.98 a gallon and per a receipt from a shopping trip in November 2024, it now costs \$3.39 a gallon. With a full house (every room occupied), we can go through 5-6 gallons a week which would put our total expenditure for milk alone at a little over \$1200 per year. Providing residents with varied choices in the food that they eat and ensuring that the cupboards and refrigerator are stocked to meet their needs is one of the most important parts of Sun House. It provides a sense of stability for residents and allows them agency in their own food choices where historically, they may have been forced to eat food that they did not want merely to survive or because it was the only thing offered at a shelter. We strive to ensure that all dietary requirements for our residents are met, which may at times require changing a meal plan to meet the need of a resident with diabetes or including vegan or shellfish free options for those who are lactose intolerant or have a food allergy. In addition to the increase in food costs, we have experienced an increase in the cost of utilities as well as increased costs for professional services such as landscaping, pest management, appliance repair, and general maintenance to be done at the facility. Per our contract with Whatcom County Health and Community Services, we are responsible for upkeep and maintenance of our shelter site which can mean maintaining the yard through landscaping services, hiring repairmen for a broken dryer, or calling out a plumber to manage a slow draining shower.



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These costs are budgeted for, but as is the case with most home repairs, these situations are often unforeseen until the need to repair them is imminent.

An increased operations budget would allow us to provide residents with expanded programming to encourage community and success in housing, meet unique transportation needs, and to combat the increased costs that come with operating a residential facility such as maintenance and repairs, appliance purchases, and utilities. By expanding funding for operational costs, we will be able to focus on providing our residents with the facilities, resources, and support that they will need to be successful in housing. We will also be able to provide them with the basic needs that they may be unable to secure due to lack of income, and we can continue to maintain a safe and secure environment for them at Sun House.

We anticipate that if support is granted to fully expand operational funding at Sun House, we will see an increase in resident success and will have the following outcomes: (1) develop expanded assistance for residents seeking housing such as document fees, application fees, background checks, etc., (2) address basic needs for residents who do not have basic needs such as clothing, hygiene products, or transportation, (3) allow us to continue to provide healthy and nutritious meals to our residents as well as healthy snacks and the ingredients for them to prepare their own meals if they so wish, (4) allow us to upgrade security measures both inside and outside Sun House such as new security cameras and keyless entry on resident doors, (5) increase our capacity to provide basic needs to residents who are moving into housing with limited income to support their comfortable transition, (6) and prepare Sun Community Service for future expansion in our community.

8. **Program Status.** How long has this program been in operation in Whatcom County? Since your last application, have you made any changes in how you offer services? If this is a new program, how far along is your agency in the planning process? What resources has your organization already invested?

Sun Community Service has been in operation in Bellingham, Washington since 1975, first serving as a crisis center for students experiencing mental health crises on the Western Washington University campus and in its current iteration as 'Sun House', an emergency shelter in Bellingham. Sun Community Service also manages and provides support to two permanent supportive housing sites in Bellingham. Our agency began a case management pilot program in January 2024 and after seeing incredible success with our residents has recently added two case managers to our staff in order to ensure resident success in housing. Our agency has invested financial resources to cover the pay rate of one case manager, financial resources to cover limited material support, management resources in the form of time that our Executive Director and Operations Manager have dedicated to the development and oversight of the program. We have begun to expand our connections to partner agencies in order to improve referral flows into Sun House as well as expanding our relationships with local agencies who can provide our residents with resources and additional support. We are in the process of creating an MOU with the Waystation to open a route from medical respite care to Sun House and we have established a stronger connection with local providers such as Compass Health and Lifeline Connections.



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2025 Community Impact Fund Grant Application Addendum

UNITED WAY FOCUS AREAS

1. To support financial stability in Whatcom County, we have identified three funding priorities below, basic needs, economic mobility, and breaking the cycle of poverty. Choose **one** category below that best aligns with your agency/program:

Basic Needs

- Food security
- Stable, attainable, affordable housing
- Health and mental health care access

Economic Mobility

- Financial literacy and training
- Vocational readiness training and support
- Adult education programs

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

- Affordable child care and early learning programs
- Academic programs to increase student attendance and achievement
- Parenting support
- Addiction treatment and recovery
- Abuse prevention

2. Please describe how your program/agency services align with the category you selected above.

Sun Community Service seeks to provide support to individuals who are experiencing homelessness and have a serious mental health diagnosis. We provide this support via emergency shelter, medication management, provided meals, basic needs (clothes, hygiene products, etc.), and on-site case management to help facilitate transitioning from shelter into permanent housing with all appropriate benefits applied for.

3. Please provide two or three key outcomes you measure that indicate progress toward your mission. List the number of clients being served, what you track, and the most recent results.

Sun Community Service tracks two primary outcomes to indicate progress: transitioning from Sun House into housing and successful engagement with case management services to meet their goals. We have the ability to serve up to 10 residents at one time and in the 2024 calendar year we served 27 unique individuals with 15 of those individuals exiting to permanent housing.



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19 of the 27 unique individuals served were able to meet their self-identified goals including: medication management, applying for food stamps, engaging in SUD treatment, learning applicable skills for living independently, and maintaining their standing in community behavioral health programs.

4. How does United Way's investment help meet the funding needs of the organization or program? Please give specific examples of how United Way funds are/will be utilized. United Way funding assists Sun Community Services with providing basic needs for our residents such as basic hygiene items, clothing, and food (both in the form of an evening meal provided every night and also in groceries for residents to eat lunch and breakfast). United Way funding will assist Sun Community Service in purchasing food for resident meals including purchasing food related to a resident's dietary restrictions if necessary. We have attempted to offset rising food costs with a set meal plan for our residents which has proven successful in mitigating food waste, but have continued to see an increase in the costs of our staples, particularly things such as milk, eggs, and our various proteins. United Way funding also assists with providing basic needs for residents, particularly since our agency supports individuals exiting from institutional settings who may not have weather appropriate clothing (such as a winter coat or close-toed shoes), personal hygiene products, or other belongings

5. Briefly describe how your agency/program will utilize community partnerships or coordinate with other agencies (UW partner agencies, other community non-profits, government agencies, local companies, schools, etc.) to advance your work/mission. Our agency works closely with community partners such as the Opportunity Council, Mental Health Court, Whatcom County Corrections, Lifeline, Lake Whatcom Treatment Center, Unity Care, Compass Health, Peacehealth, and others to support our residents once they have entered Sun House. We collaborate to support our residents and ensure their success in achieving their housing goals as well as other self-identified goals such as employment, increasing income, applying for benefits, managing medications, and managing any physical health conditions. We receive referrals from the previously listed agencies and work closely with them through the referral process, intake process, and then continue to collaborate with them once their resident has entered Sun House.

6. United Way focuses on ALICE households in Whatcom County. ALICE refers to households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level but not enough to afford the basic cost of living in our community.
 - a. What percentage of your program recipients are below the ALICE threshold based on the survival budget for Whatcom County? 100%
 - b. What percentage of your program recipients are ALICE (above FPL but below the ALICE threshold)? 0%



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c. Do you collect client data by zip code? No

Visit the [United for ALICE](#) website for the most recent (2024 report) Whatcom County data to determine the survival budget guidelines for ALICE households.

7. Please share an example of a client who was helped by your services.

**Note: if you receive a 2025 Community Impact Grant, this story may be shared on your behalf by United Way for the purpose of our community fundraising. Names and details may be altered for privacy.*

During the 2024 calendar year, we accepted a resident who had been at Sun House several times before. He was a younger gentleman with untreated schizoaffective disorder who struggled with PTSD from childhood trauma and ongoing struggles with substance use disorder who had clashed with some staff during his previous stays which had resulted in him being discharged to the streets. I am a firm believer that everyone deserves a second chance (and sometimes three or four) and so when his referral came in, I accepted him again despite his previous track record with the agency. We were able to provide a supportive and safe environment for him which allowed him the time to begin to feel stable before we began to work on the process of identifying and completing his self-identified goals. This resident was able to focus on seeking employment, successfully utilizing coping skills, attending therapeutic sessions with his counselor, and identifying wanting to attend school at BTC. This resident ultimately ended up exiting from Sun House into subsidized housing with a bright outlook on the future and excitement about what his next steps would be.