



# EQUITABLE RESOURCE ALLOCATION PLAYBOOK

United Way Worldwide  
February 2023





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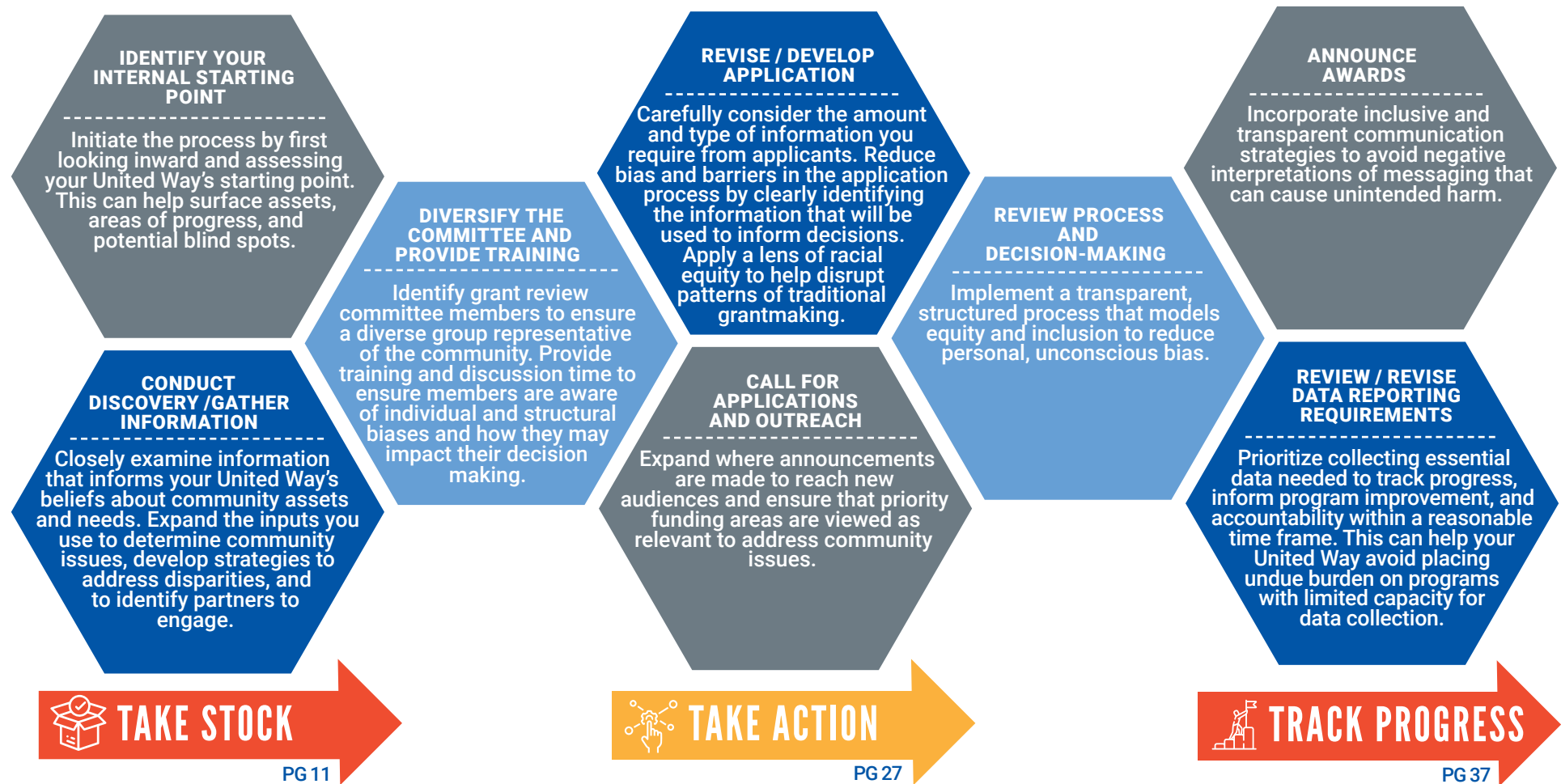
# CONTENTS

	<a href="#">INTEGRATING EQUITY IN YOUR ALLOCATIONS PROCESS – KEY STEPS</a>	5
	<a href="#">INTRODUCTION</a>	7
	<a href="#">COMMONLY USED TERMS</a>	8
	<a href="#">TAKE STOCK</a>	11
	<a href="#">Identify your internal starting point</a>	12
	<a href="#">Gather information</a>	21
	<a href="#">TAKE ACTION</a>	27
	<a href="#">Diversify the committee and provide training</a>	28
	<a href="#">Revise or develop a grant application</a>	29
	<a href="#">Call for applications and targeted outreach</a>	31
	<a href="#">Review process and decision-making</a>	33
	<a href="#">Announce awards</a>	35
	<a href="#">TRACK PROGRESS</a>	37
	<a href="#">Review or revise data reporting requirements</a>	38





# INTEGRATING EQUITY IN YOUR ALLOCATIONS PROCESS – KEY STEPS



\*Please note, this playbook is not intended to be followed in sequence or linear approach. Apply it to your current standing and deepen the work where you have resources and momentum. Use discretion and solicit feedback from stakeholders to determine actions that are feasible for your organization and challenge the status quo to advance the organization's equity work.





# INTRODUCTION



This playbook provides guidance to help United Ways integrate equity as a process and outcome into resource allocation, whether you are just starting or already made changes to your allocations process. United Ways take diverse approaches to integrate equity into their strategies—where relevant, we showcase examples from local United Ways and other organizations. No one-size-fits-all approach exists. Each United Way should start where there are resources and momentum to challenge their practices, policies, and procedures.

Before exploring methods for integrating equity into your resource allocation process, familiarize yourself with key resources that will help strengthen and deepen your understanding of our approach to community impact and equity.

## **THE COMMUNITY IMPACT MODEL**

A summary of our 2028 U.S. Impact Goals, the original Strategy Guides, and information about how to establish a Community Impact agenda. (Note: This resource is accessible via United Way Online; please use your credentials to sign in).

## **THE STRATEGY GUIDES IN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH SUCCESS, ECONOMIC MOBILITY, AND HEALTH**

A resource that provides specific strategies, approaches, and local examples to help United Ways advance equitable change in education (childhood and youth success), economic mobility, and health.

## **THE EQUITY FRAMEWORK**

A tool to help build the capacity of United Ways to integrate an explicit equity lens throughout their work and core business practices.

## **THE EQUITY TOOLKIT**

A tool to assist you in building an internal understanding of the core issues related to equity and deepen your organization's capacity to focus on race, equity, and inclusion.

**For additional guidance, review the [U.S. Implementation Guidance for Equity Membership Requirements](#).**



# COMMONLY USED TERMS

Below are terms commonly used throughout this document. Leverage our [United Way equity glossary](#) to facilitate shared language related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## AGENCIES

(used interchangeably with programs)

An entity funded by local United Ways that often administers one or more programs. Funding may be based on longstanding relationships between the United Way and the agency, referred to as a “traditional funding model,” or driven by the degree of alignment between the agency’s work and stated United Way goals.

## ALLOCATIONS COMMITTEE

Volunteer committees organized by local United Ways to review and make grant award recommendations.

## ALLOCATIONS PROCESS

The method by which United Ways engage volunteer community members to identify, review, and recommend grant awards for local programs and agencies to meet community needs. The allocations process occurs annually or every set number of years and typically includes reviews of an agencies’ programs, policies, and finances; site visits; and panel interviews. United Way staff and/or board members review and approve Allocations Committee recommendations.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

The process by which local United Ways create positive community change to improve the lives of residents and address underline community conditions. This includes:

- Effectively using data, especially disaggregated data to understand the presence and prevalence of issues
- Engaging community residents to understand lived experiences and identify potential solutions
- Analyzing data and residents’ experiences to surface disparities
- Identifying priorities that reflect community needs/issues the United Way is well-positioned to address
- Developing strategies, including resource investment, to address challenges
- Reporting back to the community and key constituencies on progress

## COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The process by which community stakeholders create cross-sector collaborations to deliver broadscale change. Key elements include a common agenda, a centralized infrastructure with dedicated staff, shared measurement to track progress, ongoing communication, and aligned/ reinforcing activities across all partners. Collective impact efforts provide opportunity to leverage community partnerships, existing efforts, and engage stakeholders to advance shared goals.

## DIVERSITY

Each individual is unique, and groups of individuals reflect multiple dimensions of difference including race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and cognitive styles.



## EQUITY

Intentional inclusion of everyone in society. Achieved when systemic, institutional, and historical barriers based on race, gender, sexuality, and other identities are dismantled and no longer predict socioeconomic, education, and health outcomes.

## GRANTEES

Recipients of local United Way grants through the allocations or other grantmaking process.

## INCLUSION

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and groups into processes and decision-making to share power.

## PROGRAMS

Specific programs funded by local United Ways. Programs provide a singular service (financial literacy, tutoring, healthcare services) or combined services often housed within a larger agency, nonprofit, or local branch of government.

## TARGETED UNIVERSALISM<sup>1</sup>

Setting universal goals pursued by targeted processes to achieve those goals. Within a targeted universalism framework, universal goals are established for all groups concerned. Strategies developed to achieve those goals are targeted based on how different groups situate within structures, culture, and across geographies. Targeted universalism is goal oriented, and processes are directed in service of the explicit, universal goal.



# TYPES OF GRANTS

Many United Ways have moved to funding specific programs run by agencies, as opposed to providing general, unrestricted grants. Use your United Way's best judgment based on the local landscape. Pros and cons for each type of funding are detailed below.

TYPE OF FUNDING	POTENTIAL PROS	POTENTIAL CONS
Unrestricted grants to agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invest in operational capacity which can improve overall organizational function.</li><li>• Reduce inequities between large and small programs</li><li>• Increase flexibility for agencies to direct resources to greatest needs.</li><li>• <u>Build Trust</u></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase difficulty measuring specific program outcomes that align to United Way goals and priority areas.</li></ul>
Restricted grants to programs run by agencies/nonprofits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quantifiable metrics and measurable outcomes related</li><li>• Directly connect program goals, activities, and intended outcomes to United Way goals and priorities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited ability of programs to adjust/redirect funds to new needs that may emerge between grant cycles (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic).</li></ul>





**TAKE STOCK**



# IDENTIFY YOUR INTERNAL STARTING POINT

Determine what progress your United Way made to meet the equity provisions of United Way's Membership Requirements:

- Develop, maintain, and publicly post an organizational position opposing all forms of racism.
- Provide annual racial equity training for staff and board members.
- Develop and use racial equity as one of the criteria for prospective community investments.

Organizations often start or mature their work from different places. Conducting a current state assessment will help you understand your starting point and illuminate areas of opportunity for ongoing development. Explore where your organization falls on the Race Matters Institute/Just Partners' [Color-Blind to Equity-Focused Continuum](#). From that starting point, dive deeper into the implications of the current state on resource allocations.

## COLOR-BLIND TO EQUITY-FOCUSED: AN INITIAL ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT <sup>2</sup>

Use the assessment results to examine your current and historical grantmaking practices. Determine how your organization currently operates and identify opportunities to further drive equity in resource allocation processes by unpacking the examples below.

**Targeted Universalism:** Setting universal goals pursued by targeted processes to achieve those goals. Within a targeted universalism framework, universal goals are established for all groups concerned. Strategies developed to achieve those goals are targeted based on how different groups situate within structures, culture, and across geographies. Targeted universalism is goal oriented, and processes are directed in service of the explicit, universal goal.





# IMPLICATIONS



COLOR-BLIND



DIVERSITY-ONLY

Diversity, equity, and inclusion might not be viewed as important. Allocation practices are not likely examined closely to understand who is served and if funded organizations have diverse leadership. You may be in a more racially homogeneous community with an organizational belief that a focus on race is not necessary.

The same organizations may repeatedly receive similar amounts without consideration of different levels of need based on populations served. Funding may not be as effectively deployed against areas of greatest need.

Grantees may focus on broad programmatic outcomes. As a result, funded programs may not have strategies and approaches that are intentionally designed to address gaps and disparities experienced by specific populations.

Grantees may not be asked about their internal organization's demographics, including board membership, executive/senior leaders, and staff. As a result, they may not share or understand the lived experiences of program participants.

Leadership and staff likely share a belief that diversity is important, but this may not translate into specific actions.

You may collect data on program participants from funded programs/agencies, but not on staff, leadership, and board members.

Your focus on representative diversity could be viewed as sufficient and not lead to deeper understanding of structural and institutional inequities and their lasting impact on marginalized communities.





## RACE-TENTATIVE



## EQUITY-FOCUSED

You believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion are important and work to close racial gaps and disparities.

Grantees are expected to disaggregate and report program data by race and ethnicity. As a result, you possess critical data necessary to understand who funded programs serve and to potentially identify gaps in which Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-led programs are sufficiently represented.

Grantees are expected to identify gaps or disparities between population groups in terms of program access and outcomes. This information, used in combination with who funded programs serve, helps address potential racial gaps.

Grantees collect and report this data but don't use information to make necessary changes to program outreach, strategies, or internal leadership. Your United Way and grantees believe in diversity and have a foundational understanding of racial equity's importance but may not be certain how to operationalize equity to address gaps or disparities in outcomes.

You examine your allocations processes and work to remove funding barriers for organizations led by individuals historically underrepresented in leadership positions, including BIPOC, women, and individuals with disabilities.

You use disaggregated data, data collected from programs, and community data to inform processes and make investments to close disparities, particularly for BIPOC residents, women, and individuals with disabilities.

Grantees are expected to identify where gaps or disparities exist in program access and to introduce strategies to close these gaps. You may or may not provide focused technical assistance to support their strategic efforts.



Grantees are expected to provide disaggregated data and use data, resident voices, and community input to address gaps. The organization applies a racial impact analysis in their decision-making and expects staff to apply a lens of equity and inclusion to their work.









# SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO GUIDE DECISION-MAKING



Once you assess your internal culture and organizational beliefs about diversity, equity, and inclusion, examine your specific past and current allocation/grantmaking practices. Use the questions below to guide your internal discussions and document responses in the right column.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<b>INVESTMENT AREAS/FOCUS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the traditional focus/history of grantmaking?</li><li>• What community issues/needs have we invested in? What issues/needs are currently excluded?</li></ul>	
<b>FUNDED ORGANIZATIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which community organizations benefit from our grantmaking practices, and which are missing from investment areas?</li></ul>	

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<p><b>CURRENT FUNDING PORTFOLIO</b></p> <p><b>What does our current grantmaking portfolio look like?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage and dollar amount of awards to each priority issue area</li> <li>• Number of applications submitted and percent ultimately funded</li> <li>• Number of funded organizations that serve BIPOC communities or are BIPOC-led (CEO, board, senior leaders)</li> <li>• Demographics of those served by funded programs/initiatives</li> <li>• Additional characteristics of funded/non-funded applications (e.g. size, location)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>INVESTMENT STRATEGIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What investment strategies currently used by your United Way are not direct services (e.g. policy/advocacy, research, capacity building/training, coalition building, convening)?</li> </ul>	

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<p><b>DECISION-MAKING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have we traditionally made investments decisions (e.g., allocations committee, competitive grants process, grants based on existing relationships)?</li> <li>• Who is involved in resource allocation decisions?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>INVESTMENT LANDSCAPE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the community's grantmaking history from other foundations/ non profits?</li> <li>• Who is investing in efforts to address racial equity in our community?</li> </ul>	



QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<p><b>COMMUNITY PERCEPTION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the perception of our organization across diverse segments based on our grantmaking practices?</li></ul>	
<p><b>COMMUNICATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How have we historically announced changes to the grantmaking process?</li><li>• What questions or push back might we anticipate, and how can we proactively address concerns?</li></ul>	

## PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Share key takeaways from your organizational assessment and past/current grantmaking processes below. What strengths can you build on, and what areas need improvement?

### ASSETS



## PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

### AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT





# GATHER INFORMATION

Consider your broader community's landscape related to changing demographics and critical community issues.

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Establish an in-depth understanding of the demographic makeup of communities your United Way serves. Review community demographics through local data organizations or the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). Census data can provide basic information about your community. [Quick Facts](#) permits you to search specific geographic units (state, city, town, or zip code).

The United Way of Greater Nashua (UWGN) used data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey to understand differences in outcomes across racial groups on key quality of life indicators, including unemployment, family income, and poverty. UWGN concluded that Black/African American residents experienced the highest inequity followed by Hispanic/Latino residents.

## SUMMARY HEALTH AND EQUITY INDEX: 2006-2010 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

Across indicators, Black and African American residents experience the most significant inequity, followed by Hispanic and Latino residents. Overcrowding is the biggest predictor of inequity among all variables studied.

	Job Quality	Unemployment	Family Income	Poverty	Mother Household	High School Degree	Home Ownership	Food Stamps	Business Ownership	Over Crowding	Index by Race
White, non-Hispanic	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Asian	0.8	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.7	1.1	1.6	0.5	0.8	4.3	1.1
American Indian	1.3	0.0	1.6	2.2	0.0	2.4	1.9	2.9	0.0	0.0	1.2
Two or More Races	1.0	1.7	1.2	1.7	1.7	1.3	1.5	2.4	0.0	3.5	1.6
Hispanic or Latino	1.5	1.9	1.4	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.9	4.2	6.7	2.7
Black or African American	1.6	1.6	1.5	3.3	2.5	1.5	2.2	3.3	8.5	6.1	3.2
Average Index by Factor	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.9	2.2	3.0	5.2	
1.0 or less = No Disparity											
1.1-1.4 = Small Disparity											
1.5 - 2.1 =Moderate Disparity											
2.2 or greater = Significant Disparity											

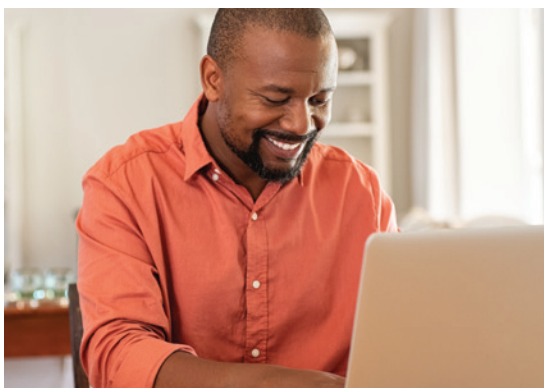
Printed with permission from The United Way of Greater Nashua (UWGN).

## EXAMPLE – UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL OHIO (UWCO)

In 2020, UWCO created an inclusive program investment process that embraced new funded partners that were diverse and reflective of its community. Believing their community is stronger and their mission more viable when the gifts of all community members are valued, embraced, and maximized, UWCO launched an effort to ensure that its funding portfolio included new agencies that were diverse and reflective of the community. In addition, UWCO reiterated its belief that organizational leadership that reflects the diversity of the community would not only put funded partners on a pathway to growth and success, but more importantly would allow them to better serve central Ohio's diverse community.

Key elements of UWCO's shift to more intentionally consider racial equity included:

- Reviewing UWCO's funding application for potentially exclusive language and removing any unnecessary barriers to application.
- Broadly promoting the application process throughout the entire nonprofit sector, ensuring that nonprofits of varying sizes serving diverse populations were aware of UWCO's request for applications.
- Developing a diverse pool of application reviewers (47% of reviewers were people of color).
- Providing diversity, equity, and inclusion training for all grant reviewers.
- Conducting site visits for all applicants (approximately 98 agencies).
- Level-setting expectations regarding continued funding.
- Requiring grantees to collect disaggregated client-level data that would allow UWCO to closely examine the impact of services on disproportionately affected populations.
- Requiring grant awardees to develop and submit a board diversity plan that ensures a board composition that reflects the diversity of the community by 2025.
- Providing grantees with capacity-building sessions that will help nonprofits and their leaders develop competencies and skills that will make them more effective and sustainable.



## TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER

Several other assessments can help you assess your United Way's current state as it relates to DEI.

- [D5's Self-Assessment for Foundation Diversity, Equity & Inclusion \(DEI\)](#)
- [ECP Becoming a Catalyst](#)

Assess your entire grantmaking strategy with the [Equitable Grantmaking Continuum](#).

# COMMUNITY-LEVEL DATA

## CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH SUCCESS, ECONOMIC MOBILITY, AND HEALTH

Review disaggregated community-level data in each impact area in which your United Way currently invests or is considering investing. Key indicators important to examine for existing gaps and disparities in access and outcomes are below. Indicators can be viewed in more depth in [United Way's Equity Strategy Guides](#), with notable data highlighted below disaggregated by race, gender, and income.



### CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH SUCCESS (see pages 42-44)

- Availability of quality, affordable childcare (e.g. informal, center-based care, 0-3 years) and preschool programs (3-5 years)
- Percent and number of children enrolled in early childhood programs (0-5 years)
- Percent of children who achieve key developmental milestones
- Percent of children prepared for kindergarten (i.e. proficient in school readiness assessments)
- Percent and number of student attending high-quality K-12 schools (schools performing satisfactorily or above state accountability requirements)
- Percent and number of students attending schools that are low-performing and/or high poverty (i.e. more than 40% of students qualify for Free and Reduced Price Meals)
- Percent and number of children and youth in afterschool/summer programs and/or receive individualized support
- Percent of students reading at third grade reading proficiency rates
- Percent of students performing at or above grade level on state annual performance assessments in core subject areas (reading, mathematics, science, social studies)



### ECONOMIC MOBILITY (see pages 74-75)

- Number and percent of individuals with access to affordable housing (i.e. less than 37% of income devoted to housing costs)
- Number of individuals with access to employment opportunities who earn a living wage
- Number of individuals who access affordable financial products and services (bank accounts, mortgages, consumer and business loans, lines of credit)
- Net worth (dollar amount)
- Median household income (dollar amount)
- Percent of individuals who are unemployed
- Percent of individuals who have a bank account
- Percent of people who own homes





## HEALTH (see pages 98-99)

- Percentage of population who are food insecure
- Percent of students in elementary, middle, and high school who meet physical activity recommendations
- Percent of adults aged 18 years and over engaged in no leisure-time physical activity
- Percent of children and adolescents with obesity
- Percent of adults with obesity
- Percent of pregnant women who receive prenatal care
- Rate of infant deaths per 1,000 live births occurred within the first year of life
- Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births
- Percent of people under age 65 who have any kind of health insurance
- Percent of adults who have a regular physician
- Percentage of adults who reported not seeking medical care or dental care due to cost

As you explore the data, consider:

- What current disparities based on race/ethnicity in the impact areas does our United Way want to address?
- What are the historical and current reasons for these disparities?
- What more could be done to address these gaps in our community, specifically by our United Way?



## ENGAGE COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

Transparency is a core principle in equity work. As you collect demographic data, share information with community residents and engage them in focused conversations to deeply understand the trends to create shared learned and perspectives. Talk with leaders in local cultural, educational, and civic organizations to understand community changes over time and put current data into historical context.

Engagement methods can vary based on your team's capacity, time frame, local relationships, past efforts, and knowledge of successful approaches. They can include one-on-one conversations, surveys, focus groups, small group meetings, and community conversations.

## EXAMPLES

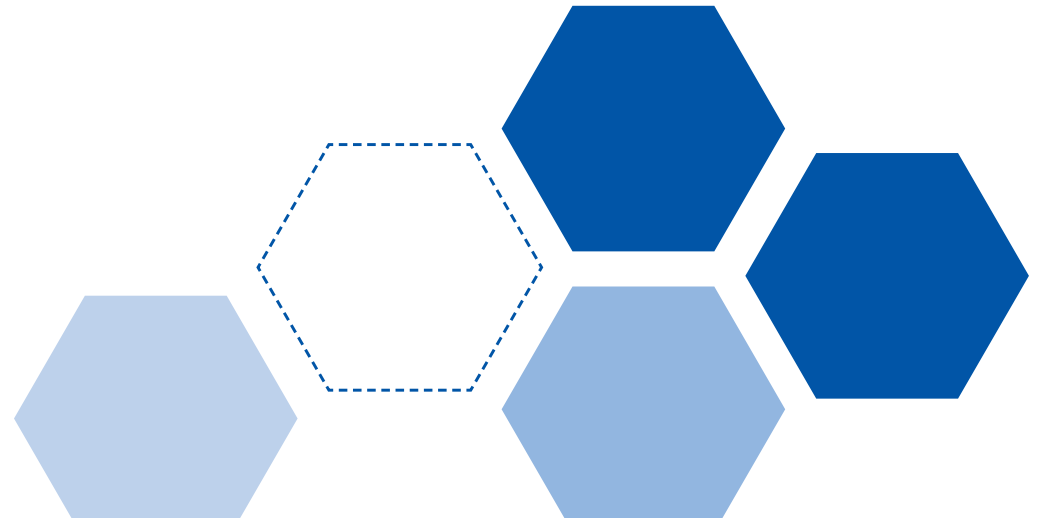
- Goal: Better understand persistent gaps in small business ownership.
- Convene a focus group of BIPOC-led businesses to assess issues owners faced starting or expanding businesses.
- Goal: Understand why students of color don't matriculate to college at the rates of their white peers.
- Host a college access night at schools with majority students of color to assess what supports and resources would help.



- Goal: Understand why two specific zip codes have the poorest health outcomes of the entire region you serve.
- Ask community volunteers/students to map assets within and/or in close proximity to these zip codes.
- Goal: Understand pressing community issues, as defined by residents themselves, to drive potential resource investments.
- Convene listening sessions at multiple, convenient community locations. See how United Way of Lane County's sessions helped inform resource investments through their new Racial Justice Fund.

## KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What do residents think are the most critical issues facing the community?
- What gaps do community residents perceive across different groups and identities, and what do they see as the basis for these disparities?
- How do perceptions compare with the disaggregated data collected and our own analysis?
- Are there differences in perspective across different groups/identities (e.g. age, race, gender, income level, length of time as a community resident)?
- How do residents perceive current efforts to address the issue? What resources, support, or initiatives are they aware? What do they feel is/is not working? What are the gaps they identify? How does this compare with gaps we already identified?
- Has our United Way sufficiently engaged all the groups/key constituencies potentially impacted by this issue?
- Are there dimensions of the issue or needs that have surfaced through our engagement activities and data gathering that are not presently part of our investment portfolio?
- What additional resource investments might we make?
- Percent of students who graduate high school on time; percent that are deemed college and career ready
- Percent of youth, ages 15-24, in school, employed and/or in training



## EXAMPLE – UNITED WAY OF SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA (UWSELA)

UWSELA built their internal and their community's capacity to collect, analyze, and utilize disaggregated data as part of their decision-making processes by incubating a data center. Beginning in 1999, UWSELA served as the fiscal agent for The Data Center, now a separate entity, to invest in creating a reliable source of local data to identify community needs. The Data Center collects and presents historical data trends in the New Orleans metropolitan area on key indicators including income, wages, employment, business and home ownership, and affordable housing. UWSELA leveraged the work of the Data Center, ALICE data, and engaged community residents to drive impact strategies. This included convening 62 community conversations that engaged approximately 600 residents. This drove the Blueprint for Prosperity, UWSELA's strategic plan that prioritizes eradicating poverty to foster regional growth and well-being.

Key elements of UWSELA's shift to use community-level data to inform resource allocation and strategy development:

- Using multiple data sources to create a complete picture of community needs and changes over time.
- Prioritizing disaggregated data use to surface differences across different groups of community residents.
- Valuing lived experience as a critical part of the data-gathering process.
- Using data and community input as a basis for funding collaborative efforts to drive change and spur innovation.
- Requiring funded programs to undergo an equity audit to determine the extent to which they internally prioritize equity.







**TAKE ACTION**

# FACILITATE AN EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE GRANTMAKING PROCESS

Each local United Way has a different process to facilitate grantmaking; some have a Community Impact Cabinet or Committee, while others convene new committees each grantmaking cycle. Enhance your current approach by integrating equity and inclusion. Use this information to modify your process rather than overhaul current operations.

## DIVERSIFY THE COMMITTEE AND PROVIDE TRAINING

**I. Selection Process** - Identify a diverse set of traditional and nontraditional community leaders who will serve as partners in revising the application. This may require establishing new relationships. Outreach during the discovery process can help identify individuals to invite to your committee. During the recruitment process, explicitly share your intent to increase diverse perspectives, but avoid tokenization.

Stakeholders to consider inviting to an Advisory Review Committee:

- Practitioners with specific experience and expertise addressing inequities in education, economic mobility, or health
- Researchers from institutions of higher education (two and four-year institutions)
- Representatives of local institutions or agencies (schools and districts, county health departments, chambers of commerce)
- Local advocates and issue-focused coalitions or representatives of organizations serving marginalized communities
- Former grantees, small nonprofits, and grassroots organizations that are not current applicants
- Other major funders in the community

### II. Deeper Engagement

Engage your new/existing Advisory Committee Members to share learnings to deepen their understanding of the organization's current state, relevant community demographics, and historical/current grantmaking philosophy practices as a grounding point. This can take the form of presentation and discussion sessions, briefing materials, and inviting members to participate in any community engagement activities planned as part of this process.

### III. Training and Development of the Committee

Consider the use of these activities:

- Relationship building as a foundational element
- Unconscious bias training
- Team review of the application and criteria and practice using tools and scoring rubrics
- Calibration exercises (e.g. reviewing sample applications followed by discussion)

## TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER

- View [How to Recruit and Onboard Diverse and Inclusive Grant Committees - PEAK Grantmaking](#)

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# REVISE OR DEVELOP GRANT APPLICATION

## Option 1 - Revise an Existing Application

In most instances, your United Way will want to build on, strengthen, and refine an existing grant application rather than create a new one. You can leverage your Advisory Committee, United Way staff, community partners (unfunded), and other stakeholders through your discovery process to make substantive changes that explicitly integrate your approach to equity.

### **I. Create guidance and a scoring rubric for stakeholders to review the current grant application and identify concerns and opportunities.**

Examples of focus areas might include:

- Inclusive language
- Areas that could be barriers or disproportionately impact smaller organizations or those without extensive internal capacity
- Options for alternate submission format other than written (conversation or video) and limit the number of questions required
- How resources can be utilized
- Limit the number of questions required for grant decisions

### **II. The internal Community Impact team, in partnership with the committee, should set goals and intentions related to the application.**

Examples include:

- Increase funding for programs that address specific racial disparities in the community (housing, jobs, college access).
- Increasing the number of submissions from BIPOC-led organizations (CEOs, board members, senior staff).
- Apply an equity lens to funding based on the amount requested or the size of the organization.
- Increase the number of new organizations engaged (especially small organizations).
- Increase funding for strategies that use place-based approaches, resident engagement, or cross-sector partnerships.

### **III. Draft a sample revised application. Include questions that capture how applicants consider equity and inclusion internally.**

## Option 2 - Develop a New Application

In instances where modifying an existing application isn't an option, consider using one of more of the options below.

### **I. Sample Applications** - Identify sample grant applications from other United Ways or local community-based organizations.

- What elements align?
- What elements don't align and might need to change?





**II. Use a Common Application** - Work with local partners to generate a common application. Examples of likely partnerships might include local community foundations or funders that award grants connected to specific impact areas. By investing in this process, you become able to naturally model collaboration while also reducing the burden of partners.

**III. Accept Applications from Other Funders** - Consider mirroring other applications. Allowing grantees to use applications accepted for other grants reduces their burden and offers an equitable approach towards distributing effort between the two parties.

Consider facilitating [a process that centers participatory grantmaking](#).

### Option 3 – Create a Separate Grant Fund

There may be reasons to establish a special, often one-time funding process for grantees. For example, some United Ways established funds during the COVID-19 pandemic to address the disparate impact on BIPOC residents. This approach enabled these United Ways to provide immediate relief to residents in greatest need by relaxing or completely forgoing requirements that might be part of their regular allocation process.

Another example is providing additional funding eligibility to current/prospective grantees that meet certain criteria or priorities (e.g. alignment with a recently updated community impact goal in education; health; or economic mobility, or focus on closing a specific gap/disparity). This could provide an intermediate pathway to ultimately align your allocations process against stated goals, including increasing racial equity. Phasing in requirements over time can build local buy-in and capacity for changes you make.

### Technical Assistance

Offering technical assistance can help the organization continue to learn what needs exist in potential grantees seeking funding. A wide range of support can be extended to ensure that organizations have access to resources and opportunity to receive funding.

Examples of technical assistance might include:

- Offer application support (a how-to-apply webinar).
- Hold discussions and trainings to help grantees learn how to involve the people they serve in the creation of solutions.
- Build capacity and help organizations to scale.
- Host office hours, informational sessions, and other meeting options.

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# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS AND TARGETED OUTREACH

## I. Reach New Audiences<sup>3</sup>

Expand the network to get word out about the grant application to accomplish goals outlined in section three. Disrupt historic patterns of communicating through the same outlets. Further, share steps taken to diversify stakeholders on the review committee, highlight changes to make the application accessible and less burdensome, and explain why the organization made changes.

**Proactively seek, reach out to, and engage potential grantees from underserved communities. Specific tactics might include:**

- Use your existing networks and relationships to communicate the grant funding opportunity (i.e. ask them to share it with their networks).
- Ask funded grantees for partners they work with and reach out to those organizations to find out about their work.
- Call or schedule a meeting with organizations you identified and personally invite them to apply.
- Create a widely distributed press release about grant opportunities for media outlets serving diverse communities.
- Use social media tools in addition to your website to advertise grant opportunities.
- Offer in-person grant information and training sessions on-location in underserved areas.
- Conduct your own research and basic due diligence on organizations you invite to apply to ensure they meet basic qualifications.

## II. Selection Process

Avoid identifying the same organizations you always fund. Equity work is a process and an outcome.

Establish a scoring rubric that incorporates weighted sections. Traditional grant application evaluation categories might include:

- Program area alignment with community need
- Financial health of the organization
- Leadership and staff capacity
- Evidence of past success delivering program results

Examples of grant application evaluation categories with an equity focus might include:

- Program's explicit focus on equity and integration into program goals, strategies, activities, and intended results
- Program's explicit focus on a particular gap or disparity (BIPOC business development, college or healthcare access)
- Target population served by the program, particularly historically disenfranchised groups
- Program's impact/results in serving hard-to-reach/historically disadvantaged populations
- Extent the program leadership and staff reflect the demographics of program participants/population served







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# REVIEW PROCESS AND DECISION-MAKING

Review grant applications using the following tips to ensure an equitable process and outcome.

## Gathering Data from Potential Grantees

The type and amount of data you request from applicants can potentially create additional barriers for organizations, especially smaller nonprofits that may not have the staff capacity to respond to requests. Think carefully about why you collect the information and how it will be used. Also consider if there are other, less time-consuming ways to gather information.

## Data-Gathering Tips

- Provide technical assistance to small and mid-size organizations to ensure they understand specific data they need to include.
- Direct applicants to local/state/national data sources to access information relevant to their program and population.
- Develop or update guidance that includes specifics on data indicators you request as part of your application process (definition, importance, how to calculate). See [United Way Worldwide's Data Reporting Guide](#) for information to include.
- Leverage your internal capacity (interns, data, or impact staff) to gather initial data.
- Provide repeat applicants data they previously submitted and request updates for areas/information as needed.

## Scoring Applications

- Consider blind review of grant applications to avoid bias in initial reviews.
- Share a list of the organizations in advance and invite review committee members to disclose any conflicts of interest to decline ranking those organizations.
- Use a rubric in the review process to standardize the approach.
- Leverage individual scoring first, but not in isolation. Instead, identify applications ranked highest and lowest.

## Prompting Discussion

- Pause and calibrate as quantitative scores are reviewed.
- Are there trends on those applications ranked the highest or lowest?
- Is weight misapplied or criticism for things like the style of language, caliber of writing, depth of data?
- Discuss both the scores and findings from the calibration exercise.
- If a significant number of former grantees rose to the top of the rankings:
- Evaluate scoring gaps.
- Identify trends in certain organizations disproportionately favored or unfavored in certain categories.
- Ask questions to surface underline or unconscious biases in the review process (e.g. favoring larger organizations, giving former grantees more leeway than warranted by their actual written responses)

## Reflect On Your Process

- If there is solid diversity among those grant applications that rose to the top, discuss what worked and what lessons you learned.



## TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER

- Continually check assumptions about what constitutes objective criteria.
- Think about where your United Way invests. Focus on outcomes that help underline conditions and create lasting change. For example, do not stop at investment in BIPOC-led organizations, but ask “Do we primarily fund people BIPOC-led organizations to do services, or do we also ensure for example, they receive advocacy grants so they can play a role in shaping public policy?”
- Build racial equity questions into the scoring systems used to screen proposals. For example, “We established a criterion that composes about 25% of a grant seeker’s overall score...the criterion requires that the organization work for or benefit communities that experience oppression of discrimination and have that as part of their analysis.”
- Focus on inclusive communications and share why it’s important to apply a lens of equity throughout the process.



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# ANNOUNCE AWARDS

Transparency is a core tenant of equity work, including sharing the process used to reach decisions. Even with process changes and intentional steps taken towards facilitating a more equitable and inclusive process highlighted, skeptics will still likely criticize the process. This is ongoing work and changing the process once will not undo years of colorblind grantmaking.

## **Share the following in your follow-up communications with grant awardees:**

- Let organizations access funds less than one month, preferably a week or less, after the grant decision.
- Provide funds via an award letter that can be signed online or does not require a signature.
- Enhance legitimacy and bring additional visibility to organizations through virtual events.

## **Share the following in your follow-up communications with organizations not selected:**

- Provide specific feedback from the review committee regarding why their organization wasn't selected.
- Share areas of strength from their application or spaces they scored well, as well as areas for ongoing development.
- Offer to reach out to them first and offer preferred technical assistance in the next grant cycle to strengthen their candidacy.
- Offer additional ways they might seek ongoing support and in the next grant cycle.

## **Use Inclusive Language**

- Beyond what is said, think about how it's said. Consider consulting a resource on inclusive communications.
- Determine how you will update diverse stakeholders including community residents, nonprofit agencies, your United Way board, and various committees.
- Avoid tokenizing or using stereotypical language and images for newly funded agencies led by individuals from marginalized communities.

## **To highlight organizations:**

- Develop a communications plan and timeline to convey the changes to your allocations process that includes core messages, specific audience segments, and the methods you will use to communicate to them.
- Leverage individuals who can serve as ambassadors in outreach to partners, programs, and agencies (e.g. United Way board member that also sits on the board of a program you support).
- Highlight the importance of capacity building and funding of different-sized and BIPOC-led grassroots organizations.

## **Be prepared to respond to the following questions:**

- Why aren't certain legacy organizations being funded?
- Why did you decide to include equity as a consideration in your grantmaking strategies?
- Why are you focusing on small and/or BIPOC-led organizations?
- Are standards compromised by funding organizations that don't have multi-year data and proven impact?
- Is it risky to fund smaller organizations that haven't displayed strong financial sustainability?

## TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER

Consider developing a new narrative to tell the story about why your United Way made these changes and reframe the issues. See [Talking About Poverty: Narratives, Counter-Narratives, and Telling Effective Stories](#).







**TRACK PROGRESS**



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# REVIEW OR REVISE DATA

## Collecting Program Data

Ensure that you have processes and data reporting elements in place that examine program impact on all participants, and on those experiencing the greatest gaps/disparities.

The more infrastructure, training, and guidance you provide, the more likely you will have the depth and quality of data needed to support continuous improvement and ensure accountability. Creating a solid data reporting process and infrastructure helps small organizations that may not have the in-house capacity and expertise needed. In addition, consider how frequently you ask grantees to report data and have a strong rationale for what measures you collect that is grounded in how your United Way will use the data (e.g. continuous improvement, strategy refinement).

### Sample Indicators to Collect from Funded Programs and/or Agencies

- Individuals served, disaggregated by race, gender, and other characteristics relevant to services provided
- Program participants achieving stated program outcomes, disaggregated by race and gender
- Program leadership (CEO, senior team, board) reflective of the community served

## Assessing Your Progress

Set goals and track your overall progress over time in making investments that include racial equity as criteria. At least annually, examine and share this progress across the organization, including board members, the leadership team, and staff.

Regularly review data on funded programs, in tandem with community-level data, to address new issues or to add new approaches.

This same information can be shared publicly to demonstrate transparency and community-level accountability. Data gathered through this process can be used by the Marketing and Communications Team to convey results to various audiences and by the Investor Relations Team (Resource Development) to demonstrate impact to current and prospective funders.

### Sample Indicators to Track Your United Way's Progress

- Community-level indicators (healthy food access, access to early childhood programs, business ownership) your United Way tracks over time to document disparities in access, opportunities, and outcomes
- Your United Way invests in early childhood programs to close racial gaps in school readiness; you track kindergarten readiness levels disaggregated by race (as locally measured).
- Your United Way invests in direct services and supports to close racial gaps in business ownership; you track disaggregated data on community businesses that are owned by people of color.
- Your United Way invests in direct services and supports to close gaps in access to healthy foods; you track disaggregated data on residents who have access to fresh produce.
  - Number of United Way and/or community impact goals that explicitly address equity (closing gaps, addressing disparities)
  - Dollar amount and percentage of United Way's investments that explicitly address equity (e.g. closing gaps, addressing disparities)
  - Number and percentage of overall grant applications submitted by and awarded to BIPOC-led organizations

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# TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER

Consider additional strategies (beyond allocations) that can help close gaps and disparities and drive equitable community change.

**Strategy:** Invest in building the operational effectiveness of nonprofits led by BIPOC leaders and serve historically disadvantaged communities of color through United Way-led initiatives, grants, or allocations.

## Examples

- [United Way of Greater Portland's Racial Equity Fund](#)
- [United Way of Metropolitan Dallas' Nonprofit Success Institute](#); [learn more](#)

**Strategy:** Invest in the leadership development of BIPOC leaders in your community through specific United Way led initiatives, grants, or allocations.

## Example

- [United Way of the Research Triangle's 10 to Watch Program](#)

**Strategy:** Partner with local research organizations and/or higher education institutions to invest in the development and public sharing of reports that highlight disparities in your community.

## Example

- [The Regional Equity Indicators Dashboard](#) co-developed by The United Way of Greater St. Louis

**Strategy:** Engage community residents to deepen your United Way's understanding of critical issues and to help create solutions.

## Examples

- [The Meadow Park Initiative](#) implemented by the [United Way of Olmsted County](#)
- [Black Empowerment Works Grants](#) implemented by the [United Way of Greater Cincinnati](#)

**Strategy:** Fund state and local policy change and advocacy efforts to address systemic racism and address gaps and disparities.

## Examples

- [United Way of Dane County – Public Policy](#)
- [United Way of Greater Cleveland – Public Policy and Advocacy](#)

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# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Explore additional resources that can help support your grantmaking process and provide examples from experiences of other United Ways.

## Requests for Proposals (RFP)

- [Housing Stability RFP](#), United Way of Olmsted County
- [Community Impact Fund Grants RFP 2021-2023](#), United Way Rhode Island
- [Community Impact Grant Application Guidelines](#), United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County

## Scoring Rubrics

- [Housing Stability RFP](#), United Way of Olmsted County
- [Community Impact Fund Grants Review 2021-2023](#), United Way Rhode Island

## Letter of Intent (LOI)

- [LOI Community Impact Fund Grants 2021-2023](#), United Way Rhode Island

## Press Releases

- [United Way Awards \\$4.5 Million in Community Impact Grant Funds](#), United Way Rhode Island
- [United Way Announces Racial Equity Collaboration Grants](#), United Way Larimer County
- [Greater Twin Cities United Way Announces \\$12.1 Million in Grants for Local Nonprofits](#), Greater Twin Cities United Way
- [United Way Announces Equity Fund Investments](#), United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes Region

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## SOURCES

1 Powell, J., Menendian, S., and Ake, W. (2019). Targeted Universalism: Policy & Practice.

2 This assessment was developed by the Race Matters Institute/Just Partners, building on the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Advancing the Mission Toolkit." Race Matters Institute, accessed May 6, 2019, <http://racemattersinstitute.org/>. Reprinted with permission.

3 PEAK How to Reduce Bias in Grantmaking Strategy, Community Outreach, and Applications



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