



2026/2027

Community Catalyst

Grant Application

United for Impact

Please contact Connie Kraft at director@uwni.org for more information about this application.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

We believe that lasting change for people in the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) population comes from a strategic focus on economic mobility, built on the foundation of stability, access, and opportunity. In Illinois, ALICE families earn above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but still struggle to afford the basic cost of living in their county.

Our approach, grounded in the real-world challenges low- and moderate-income families and individuals face as they navigate a complex and often fragmented system, aims to equip families with the tools they need to move from crisis to stability, and from stability to long-term success.

Funding will be directed to agencies advancing long-term stability and opportunity for ALICE families and individuals. Grants will be awarded to nonprofit organizations contributing to United Way's core impact areas: Financial Security, Healthy Community, and Youth Opportunity. Consideration will also be given to efforts that incorporate key enablers of success when these components directly support outcomes in the core focus areas and contribute to disrupting the cycle of instability. Agency collaboration is encouraged to drive stronger community outcomes.

IMPACT THEME: United for Impact

Our Commitment to Thriving Communities

United Way's goal is to disrupt the cycle of instability faced by ALICE families and individuals, recognizing that financial vulnerability, health challenges, and childhood development are deeply interconnected. To address the instability cycle, we focus on three core areas: Financial Security, Healthy Community, and Youth Opportunity.

I. FINANCIAL SECURITY

Financial literacy, debt reduction, resource education, supporting economic mobility, and workforce-linked services that help families build lasting economic security.

II. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Programs that improve access to public health, primary care or initiation or retention of behavioral health treatment and social needs navigation, along with services that strengthen family and community health. These services can include building health literacy through nutrition education, expanding preventive care outreach, providing mental health support, managing chronic diseases, and increasing access to community-based wellness programs.

III. YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

We invest in the success of children and youth to interrupt generational poverty and build stronger futures. From birth through young adulthood, they need safe, enriching environments, well-equipped caregivers, caring mentors, and opportunities to grow up healthy and prepared for adulthood. When this happens, families and communities thrive. This work includes multigenerational initiatives that strengthen family well-being and create long-term pathways to education, employment, and health, such as childcare, school readiness and attendance or safe after-school/summer programs and family engagement.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All applicant organizations must meet the following:

- Be located in and provide service in at least one of the counties we serve (Stephenson, Jo Daviess, and Carroll Counties).
- Must be a 501c3 in good standing
- Have a mission focused on helping families living at or below ALICE threshold.
- Offer programs/activities/services that align with at least one of United Way's impact areas listed above.
- Have a non-discrimination policy or will adopt one if awarded funding (UWNWIL can help with this).
- In the need statement, Applicants must cite the county CHNA/IPLAN and ALICE data and state how the program meets the need of the ALICE population.

For information on ALICE in Illinois, visit:

- <https://unitedforalice.org/introducing-alice/illinois>
- <https://www.unitedforalice.org/the-cost-of-basics/illinois>

The following types of organizations are not eligible to apply:

- Animal Welfare Organizations
- Capital projects and/or campaigns
- Debt reduction and funding gaps
- Academic research
- Endowments
- Scholarships
- Sectarian or religious purposes
- To support candidates for public office or promote a partisan cause
- Organizations that re-grant funding

If awarded, agencies will:

- Receive grant funds over a one-year grant period, distributed in 12 monthly installments.
- Provide ACH information to United Way to allow direct deposit of funds.
- Provide "Impact of a Dollar" examples showing what donor contributions achieve.

REPORTING

United Way of Northwest Illinois believes that strong data and compelling stories are essential to shaping strategies that create real change for ALICE families and individuals. To move the needle forward together, we must consistently collect both quantitative and qualitative

information. Reporting not only demonstrates the impact of your work but also strengthens UWNWIL's ability to communicate results with donors, partners, and the community.

With this purpose in mind, UWNWIL has established the reporting requirements below. These expectations are designed to ensure accountability, highlight community impact, and support our shared goal of advancing long-term stability for ALICE households.

Annual Impact Report

All funded agencies must submit a Quarterly Report. Funded Agencies will also be required to complete an Annual Impact Report, which will be due by July 15th, 2027. Funded agencies will use the UWNWIL template. The template will be provided at least three weeks prior to the submission deadline.

Agencies are Responsible for Collecting and Reporting Data on

- The number of unduplicated clients served.
- Demographic information (employment/retirement status, income level, etc., if collected).
- Outcome measures related to Financial Security, Healthy Community, and Youth Opportunity.
- Other indicators agreed upon at grant approval.
- Providing Narrative Information
- Brief description of any anticipated organizational or program changes.
- At least one impact story, and 3-5 photos with the appropriate consent or existing programs, please provide photos from the beginning of the grant period.
- Confirming Compliance
- Annual Counterterrorism compliance certification.
- Confirmation of tax-exempt status and governance documents (or note of changes).

METRICS

Agencies are encouraged to select from the metrics provided below that align with their programs. In addition, applicants may propose their own metrics that best reflect the unique impact of their work, provided they clearly demonstrate a connection to United Way's core focus areas: Financial Security, Healthy Community, and Youth Opportunity.

Required Indicators

Instructions: Check each **milestone** your program will move. For each selected milestone, choose **1–3 indicators** you will report. Keep **one piece of documentation** on site for each result (no PII in reports). **Choices 1. Financial Lift 2. Stable and Safe Housing 3) Primary or Behavioral Health Care Connection 4. Child Stability.**

1) Financial Lift

Examples of indicators (choose 1–3):

- Wage increase, more hours, or job placement with 90-day retention
- Public benefit approved (e.g., SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, LIHEAP, childcare subsidy)
- Credit score improvement or debt reduction (if available)
- Employment credential or industry certification attained

2) Stable and Safe Housing

Examples of indicators (choose 1–3):

- Affordable or stable housing obtained (including shelter-to-housing transition)
- Eviction or utility shut-off prevented
- Housing retention at 6 or 12 months

3) Primary or Behavioral Health Care Connection

Examples of indicators (choose 1–3):

- Primary care provider established
- First mental-health or substance-use appointment kept
- Preventive screening completed (e.g., well-visit, immunization, screening)

4) Child Stability

Examples of indicators (choose 1–3):

- Early childhood or after-school participation (60+ days)
- Kindergarten readiness met or K–3 literacy progress
- School attendance at 90 percent or higher
- Credit or grade recovery completed

SUGGESTED INDICATORS

Financial Security

- Total number of individuals who received job skills training.
- Total number of individuals who accessed financial services, products, and education (e.g., free tax prep, savings accounts, public benefits).
- Number and/or percentage of individuals provided employment services who gained employment
- Number of individuals provided employment services.
- Number and/or percentage of individuals served who increased their wages.
- Total number of individuals served in programs designed to increase wages.
- Number and/or percentage of individuals served who increased their disposable income by accessing benefits and/or reducing their costs/expenses.
- Number and/or percentage of individuals who improved credit scores or reduced debt within 12 months.
- Number and/or percentage of individuals that earn job-relevant licenses, certificates, and/or credentials.
- Number and/or percentage of individuals served who obtained affordable, stable housing (rental) or home ownership.
- Number and/or percentage of participants reporting decreased reliance on emergency financial assistance.

Healthy Community

- Total number of individuals participating in physical activity and healthy food access/nutrition programs.
- Number and/or percentage of children/adults served who eat healthier, increase their physical activity, and move towards a healthy weight.
- Total number of individuals served with access to healthcare services and supports.

- Total number of individuals served with access to mental health services.
- Number and/or percentage of youth/adults served who avoid or reduce risk-taking behaviors (e.g., alcohol/drug abuse, unprotected sexual activity).
- Percentage of reduction in food insecurity indicators (fewer skipped meals, greater meal consistency, etc.).
- Percentage of increase in preventive screenings (blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, etc.).

Youth Opportunity

- Total number of children (0-5) enrolled in high-quality early childhood programs.
- Total number of children served receiving literacy supports in K-3.
- Total number of families/caregivers served that are provided with information, resources, tools, trainings, and/or teaching skills to support their child's development (birth - 21).
- Total number of elementary/middle/high school youth served who participate in school and/or community-based out-of-school time programs and/or receive individualized supports.
- Total number of youth participating in out-of-school time programs or mentorship initiatives.
- Total number of youth who receive job skills training.
- Number and/or percentage of children served who maintain satisfactory or improve school attendance.
- Number and/or percentage of youth served who gain post-secondary employment, further education, or credentials.

Post Award Requirements

Organizations that awarded a Community Catalyst Grant are expected to comply with the following:

1. Report on the agreed upon Metrics to UWNWIL in your quarterly progress report and the annual final reports. Submit program and financial progress reports on time, as requested.
2. Meet all required reporting deadlines.
3. Implement publicity and co-branding with United Way of Northwest Illinois on your materials related to the funded program
4. Display the UWNWIL trademarked logo within their facilities and on all communications materials pertaining to UWNWIL -funded programs
5. All program marketing materials are to be submitted to UWNWIL to ensure accurate branding requirements
6. If there are any changes in program operations that impact the organization's ability to fulfill its requirements under this MOU, organizations are expected to meet with UWNI staff to discuss the situation and develop a plan of action.

Submission Dates and Times – **The application is due March 27th at 4:00 P.M.**

February 10th, 2026	RFP available online (uwni.org)
February 18th, 20th, 24th	RFP Informational Session & Community Catalyst Introduction. RSVP REQUIRED
March 27 th , 2026	Grant proposal due at 4:00P.M.
March 27 th , 2026	Linkage agreement due (if collaborators)
April-May, 2026	Committee Review
July, 2026	Funding Award Announced
December 31 st , 2026	6 month progress report due (each year funded)
July 15 th , 2027	Annual Report Due (each year funded)

United Way of Northwest Illinois (“UWNWIL”) reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to: fund or not fund any application, award amounts that differ from those requested, fund only portions of a proposal, modify, suspend, or withdraw this RFP, request additional information, waive informalities, and reject any or all proposals. UWNWIL may terminate or discontinue funding, in whole or in part, at any time—(a) for convenience with notice, or (b) for cause, including but not limited to non-performance, misuse of funds, failure to meet reporting or compliance obligations, or violations of law or grant terms. UWNWIL may rescind, reduce, or delay awards if fundraising results or other material circumstances change.

No Obligation / No Contract. This RFP does not obligate UWNWIL to make any award. No contract is created by submitting an application; any funding will be governed by a separate award letter or grant agreement executed by UWNWIL. Application costs are the applicant’s sole responsibility.