

STRONG FAMILIES
Place-Based Collaborative Funding
Opportunity July 2026
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS



**UNITED
WAY**
Rhode Island

www.unitedwayri.org



INTRODUCTION

United Way of Rhode Island is seeking proposals from qualified community-based organizations to participate in the **Strong Families Place-Based Collaborative**. This initiative funds partnerships of organizations to design and implement coordinated; community-based systems of support that help families move from crisis to stability and toward long-term economic mobility.

We plan to invest in equitable, collaborative, place-based models that align services, reduce fragmentation, and create coordinated pathways that support families in achieving their self-defined goals.

Aligned with United Way of Rhode Island's **2026-2029 Strong Rhode Island framework**, this funding opportunity aims to:

- Remove barriers for ALICE® (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families so that they can pursue long-term goals
- Prevent housing instability and deeper economic hardship
- Strengthen family income, employment, and financial security
- Support long-term economic mobility and asset building

Applications for this RFP are due on **September 3, 2026**.





STRATEGIC INTENT

United Way defines family not by structure or legal status, but by chosen communities. Family includes the people who support and care for one another and can take many forms.

Families are strong when they can meet today's challenges while shaping tomorrow's possibilities. This strength is built not only through income but through coordinated relationships, services, and systems that support, affirm dignity, and unlock potential.

Aligned with the **Strong Families** journey, the initiative aims to ensure:

- **Supporting** ALICE households in achieving stability and economic mobility

- **Building** coordinated, place-based ecosystems of support that strengthen nonprofit collaboration and improve system effectiveness
- **Ensuring** a “No Wrong Door” approach, ensuring that families can access services through multiple entry points and be connected to the full range of support they need without fragmentation or duplication
- **Serving** as a convener, strategist, and accountability partner alongside community partners

Our goal with this strategy is to fund place-based partnerships that coordinate efforts, remove barriers, and create clear pathways to economic mobility.



WHY THIS APPROACH?

Over the past several years, United Way of Rhode Island tested and refined elements of a place-based, collective impact approach through partnerships in Providence, including investments in Providence Equity Fund; Family Stability Initiative (in partnership with the Siemer Institute); The Guaranteed Income Pilot, in partnership with the City of Providence; and coordinated service delivery and economic mobility initiatives such as the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) initiative. These efforts consistently demonstrate the value of aligning community partners around shared outcomes, coordinated referrals, and family-centered support systems.

This funding opportunity builds upon those lessons and reflects a broader movement across the United Way network.

United Way defines collective impact as a structured form of collaboration in which organizations align around shared outcomes, common measures, coordinated activities, and continuous learning to create meaningful community-level change. More than 75 United Ways nationwide are implementing collective impact and place-based strategies designed to strengthen local ecosystems, improve service coordination, and advance long-term outcomes for families.



PRIORITY POPULATION

The United Way of Rhode Island prioritizes organizations that are located in and/or serve communities with a high concentration of ALICE households. ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households work, earn above the federal poverty level, and are priced out of stability by the high cost of living.

In Rhode Island as of 2024, 4 out of 10 households are below the ALICE threshold. For more information by city, take a look at the table below.

	City	% of Households below ALICE Threshold
1	Central Falls	75.15%
2	Woonsocket	58.04%
3	Providence	55.13%
4	Pawtucket	52.88%
5	East Providence	47.07%
6	New Shoreham	44.90%
7	Hopkinton	44.46%
8	West Warwick	43.74%
9	Newport	42.03%
10	Narragansett	41.03%
11	Cranston	40.85%

Why ALICE Matters:

- Anyone can be ALICE at some point in their lives. ALICE households can be of any race, age, ethnicity, education level, or occupation
- ALICE households represent a large and often overlooked segment of the community
- ALICE workers are essential to the fabric of society. They keep local economies running
- When ALICE households face financial strain, it affects community health, workforce, and economic growth
- ALICE data offers a clear, unbiased framework to understand hardship and guide policy and investment

United Way of Rhode Island uses ALICE data to guide equitable investment and focus resources where they are needed most.



We are seeking place-based partnerships that operate as a coordinated system of support for families. Funded partnerships will implement a “No Wrong Door” approach, ensuring that families can access services through multiple entry points and be connected to the full range of support they need without fragmentation.

Rather than functioning as a collection of independent programs, partnerships should be designed to operate as an aligned system with shared responsibility for supporting families over time.

Strong proposals will demonstrate:

- **Clear coordination across partners**, including defined roles and pathways for how family’s access and move between services
- **Family-centered design**, with services aligned to family-defined goals and responsive to changing needs over time
- **Community-based access**, ensuring services are accessible within the communities where families live
- **A focus on prevention and stabilization**, not only crisis response

Detailed expectations for partnership structure, service delivery, and coordination are outlined in the Project Scope section.

PROJECT SCOPE

Funded communities will design and implement a place-based, coordinated system of support that helps families with constrained financial flexibility towards long-term economic mobility. This is not a program with a single pathway, but a collaborative model that brings multiple partners together to function as an aligned, responsive system within a defined community.

This opportunity is intended to illustrate possibilities rather than prescribe a specific model. We recognize that each community has unique assets, relationships, and needs. Applicants are encouraged to propose structures that reflect their local context. Each funded partnership will be responsible for designing and implementing a model that reflects local context while aligning with the core principles of the Strong Families approach.

Core Design Expectations

All proposals must demonstrate how partners will work together to deliver a coordinated, multi-tiered continuum of support for families. This includes:



A Clearly Defined Collaborative Model

- Partnerships must include multiple organizations working together within a defined community
- One organization must serve as the lead/backbone partner and fiscal agent, responsible for:
 - overall coordination
 - performance and outcomes
 - alignment across partners
- All partners share responsibility for supporting families over time, not just delivering one-off services.

A Three-Tiered Continuum of Support

Partnerships must demonstrate how families will be supported across a coordinated continuum:

- **Tier 1: Addressing Immediate Barriers** - Support for families experiencing crisis or instability, including access to basic needs and housing stabilization. Clear pathways for connection to longer-term support.
- **Tier 2: Stabilization** - Ongoing, coordinated support to help families achieve stability, including case management, financial and workforce development, and other services that strengthen household resilience.
- **Tier 3: Economic Mobility** - Support focused on long-term goal setting, financial coaching, and pathways to increased income and asset building.

Proposals must clearly describe:

- how families navigate the social services landscape
- how they move across tiers over time
- how partners coordinate to support that progression

Coordinated Service Delivery (“No Wrong Door”)

Partnerships must demonstrate how they will operate as a connected system, ensuring that families can access support through multiple entry points without experiencing fragmentation. This includes:

- Clear referral pathways and follow-up processes
- Warm handoffs between partners
- Defined roles to minimize duplication and gaps



Shared Responsibility for Families

Partnerships must demonstrate how they will collectively support families across organizations. This may include:

- Coordinated or shared case management approaches
- Communication structures across partners
- Mechanisms to ensure continuity of support

Commitment to Learning and Improvement

Partnerships will participate in a shared learning and evaluation approach to understand both family progress and system performance. Please see the Shared Learning & Evaluation Approach section for additional details. Proposals should describe how partners will:

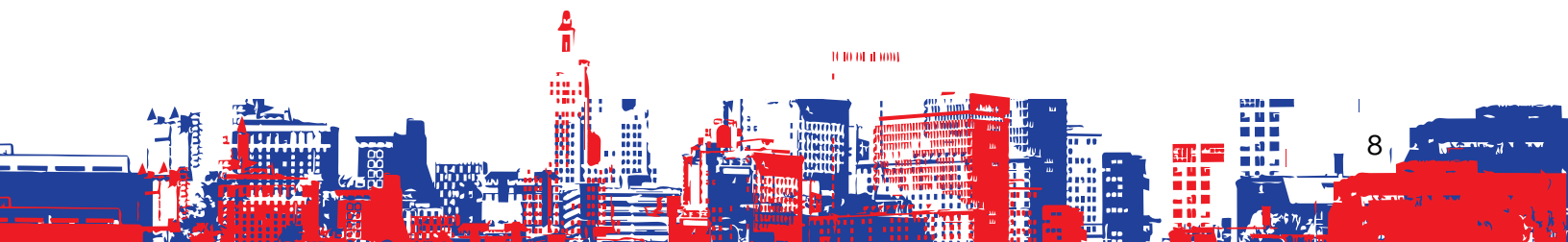
- Contribute to shared data and learning efforts
- Use insights to adapt and improve their approach; such as collecting feedback from families to adapt and improve
- Engage in ongoing reflection as a collaborative
- Collect feedback from families to adapt and improve

Note: Proposals that primarily describe co-located or loosely connected services, without clear coordination and shared responsibility, will not be considered competitive.

TIMELINE & DELIVERABLES

Funded collaboratives should anticipate participating in:

- Monthly collaborative meetings with partners in their collaborative and United Way program staff to review progress, share learnings, address challenges, and coordinate implementation.
- Quarterly learning sessions/community of practice meetings facilitated by United Way of Rhode Island
- Shared outcome tracking with support as needed from the team at the United Way.
- Annual reflection and planning sessions
- Participation in evaluation and storytelling activities
- Coordination with and support from United Way staff



This initiative will be implemented in three phases:

Phase 1: Planning (Must be completed by June 30, 2027)

The following deliverables are expected at the end of the planning period:

- Conduct community needs assessment
- Formalize partnerships, including MOUs and governance structure
- Establish lead partner and project team
- Design a coordinated service delivery model

What to expect from United Way in Phase 1:

- Collaborative Capacity Building - Support to strengthen governance, partner alignment, shared decision-making, and collaborative effectiveness.
- Convening & facilitation - Regular partner meetings, alignment sessions, and cross-sector coordination
- Technical assistance - Support program design, implementation, and scaling
- Data & evaluation support - Shared metrics, data systems, and learning frameworks

Phase 2: Implementation (Will begin by July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2029)

During this period, partners are required to meet the following deliverables:

- Launch a coordinated service delivery model
- Use ongoing learning to refine and strengthen program implementation
- Build and expand funding/resources for sustainability over time
- Deepen collaboration across partners

What to expect from United Way at this stage:

- Continued support from Phase 1.
- Develop a community of practice to promote growth, learning, and continuous improvement across communities & strategies.
- Support for policy and advocacy efforts in support of ALICE families in Rhode Island.
- Visibility & storytelling support at a state level for greater impact awareness and funding development with key stakeholders.

Phase 3: Transition & Sustainability (July 1, 2029 – June 30, 2030)

During this period, partners are required to meet the following deliverables:

- Strategic planning for long-term continuation
- Funding provided based on certain benchmarks and match funding
- Document lessons learned

What to expect from United Way at this stage:

- Targeted support based on meeting the major KPIs and sustainability planning



WHAT APPLICANTS SHOULD PLAN FOR

Funded collaboratives should anticipate participation in:

- Monthly collaborative meetings
- Quarterly learning sessions/community of practice meetings facilitated by United Way of Rhode Island
- Shared outcome tracking with support as needed from the team at the United Way.
- Annual reflection and planning sessions
- Participation in evaluation and storytelling activities
- Coordination with United Way staff

BUDGET GUIDELINES

Funding is available in the following stages:

Funding Stage	Amount	Purpose	Timing
Planning Grant	Up to \$75,000 per community	Support partnership development and model design	Through June 30, 2027
Implementation Stage	Up to \$250,000 per community	Support program implementation and coordinated service delivery	July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2029
Transition & Sustainability	Up to \$50,000 per community, contingent on match funding	Support long-term sustainability planning	July 1, 2029 – June 30, 2030

Budgets should reflect the full cost of designing and implementing a coordinated, place-based model. This may include:

- Planning grants are intended to support partner engagement, facilitation, community outreach, planning activities, governance development, and collaborative design
- Personnel and benefits; such as the salary and fringe for a coalition coordinator
- Program design and service delivery
- Partnership coordination and collaboration
- Administrative and operational costs
- Community engagement and outreach
- Evaluation and learning activities
- Direct cash assistance provision for families to help remove barriers that prevent families from crisis and help them move towards their economic goal

Collective Responsibility (All Partners)

- Participate in shared governance and decision-making
- Align to common outcomes and performance measures
- Engage in continuous improvement and learning cycles
- Share accountability for family outcomes—not just individual program outputs
- Contribute to a seamless, “No Wrong Door” system experience

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES MEASUREMENTS

Shared Learning & Evaluation Approach

United Way of Rhode Island is committed to a shared learning approach that helps us understand both family progress and system effectiveness, while minimizing burden on partners. This approach will be refined during the planning phase in partnership with funded communities. The goal is to establish a focused, hands-on and practical framework that supports learning, adaptation, and continuous improvement. Participation in this shared learning approach is a core expectation of all funded partnerships.

We will focus on two primary domains:

1. Family Stability & Economic Mobility

Partners will contribute to a shared understanding of how families are progressing along the continuum from crisis to stability to economic mobility. This will focus on a small set of aligned indicators that can be integrated into existing workflows where possible. Examples may include:

- Changes in housing stability
- Changes in income or employment status
- Progress toward family-defined goals or overall stability

2. System Effectiveness

In addition to family outcomes, this initiative will assess how well partnerships are functioning as a coordinated system.

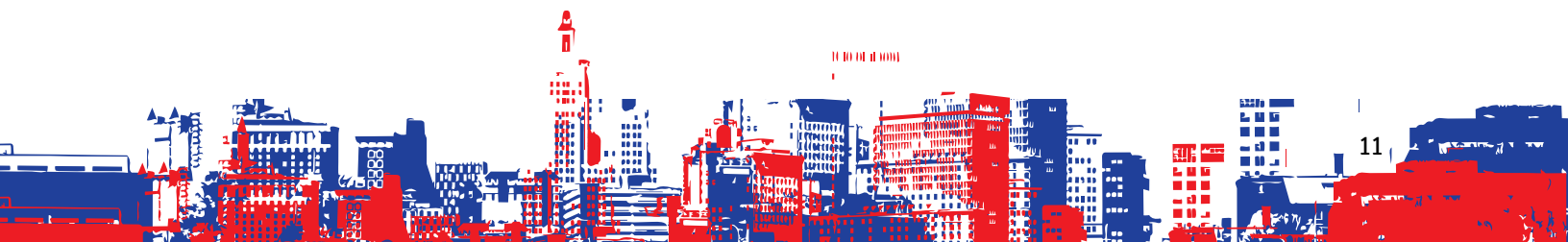
- Effectiveness of referrals and warm hand-offs
- Timeliness of access to appropriate services
- Coordination across partners supporting the same family
- Identification of gaps or barriers in the system

How We Will Learn:

Continuous Learning & Adaptation

All partners will participate in a shared learning process designed to support reflection, problem-solving, and ongoing improvement. United Way will provide guidance, facilitation, and technical assistance to support this process, with the goal of building a culture of learning across all participating communities. This will include:

- Regular opportunities to review emerging data and insights
- Structured discussions to identify challenges and opportunities
- Adaptation of strategies and approaches over time



Approach to Data Collection

We recognize that partners operate with different levels of data capacity. United Way will work with partners during the planning phase to align indicators, definitions, and data collection approaches. This approach is designed to:

- Build on existing data systems where possible
- Optimize the number of required indicators
- Prioritize useful insights over comprehensive reporting

FAQ'S

SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF THIS FUNDING

What is the purpose of this funding?

This initiative supports place-based partnerships that design and implement coordinated systems of support to help families move toward long-term stability and economic mobility.

What does “place-based” mean?

Place-based refers to a collaborative approach focused within a clearly defined geographic community or neighborhood where partners work together to address local needs and improve outcomes for families.

What populations are prioritized through this initiative?

United Way of Rhode Island prioritizes communities with high concentrations of ALICE households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed).

What is meant by a “No Wrong Door” approach?

Families should be able to enter the system through any partner organization and be seamlessly connected to the services and supports they need without duplication, delays, or fragmentation.

What defines success for this initiative?

Success includes:

- Improved outcomes that advance long-term family stability and economic mobility
- Strong coordination across partners
- Effective referrals and service navigation
- Increased system responsiveness and collaboration



SECTION 2. PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE

Do all partnerships need to be fully established at the time of application

No. Partnerships do not need to be fully finalized at the time of application; however, key partners should be identified and formal partnership agreements (MOUs) are expected during the planning phase.

What types of organizations should be included in a partnership?

Partnerships should collectively provide a continuum of support, which may include:

- Community-based organizations
- Housing providers
- Workforce development agencies
- Financial stability organizations
- Education and youth-serving organizations
- Other organizations aligned with economic mobility goals

Is there a minimum or maximum number of partners required?

No. Partnerships should be appropriately structured to provide coordinated services across all three tiers without unnecessary duplication or service gaps.

Can one organization fulfill multiple roles within the collaborative?

Yes. Organizations may serve multiple functions if roles are clearly defined and organizational capacity is demonstrated.

What qualifies as a lead partner or backbone organization?

The lead partner serves as the fiscal agent and is responsible for:

- Convening and coordination
- Governance and communication
- Performance oversight
- Shared accountability and learning processes

How often will partners need to meet?

Partnerships should expect regular coordination meetings and participation in shared learning sessions and communities of practice.



SECTION 3. PROGRAM DESIGN & SERVICE DELIVERY

Do all partnerships need to provide services across all three tiers?

Collectively, the partnership must address all three tiers:

1. Immediate barriers/crisis response
2. Stabilization and coordinated support
3. Economic mobility and long-term opportunity

Individual organizations do not need to operate across all tiers independently.

How clearly defined do referral pathways need to be at the application stage?

Applications should demonstrate a clear vision for coordination and referrals. Operational details may continue to be refined during the planning phase.

What should coordinated service delivery look like?

Strong collaboratives will demonstrate:

- Warm handoffs between partners
- Shared communication processes
- Clear referral pathways
- Coordinated family support across organizations

Can funding support both direct services and coordination activities?

Yes. This initiative is intended to support both service delivery and the infrastructure needed for effective collaboration and coordination.

What IS and IS NOT a Place-Based Collective Impact Model

Strong Collective Impact Model	Less Competitive Model
Shared outcomes	Independent goals
Coordinated referrals	Informal referrals
Backbone organization	No clear leadership
Shared accountability	Separate reporting
Family-centered pathways	Program-centered services

SECTION 4. FUNDING & BUDGET QUESTIONS

How much funding is available?

Funding Phase	Amount
Planning Grant	Up to \$75,000 per community
Implementation	Up to \$250,000 per community
Transition & Sustainability	Up to \$50,000 per community (contingent on match funding)

Can funding be used for administrative or indirect costs?

Yes. Budgets may include administrative, coordination, infrastructure, evaluation, and operational costs necessary to support the collaborative model.

Can partners subcontract or regrant funds to other organizations?

Yes, provided there is clear documentation and alignment with the collaborative model and the lead partner maintains accountability.

Is the recommended funding distribution mandatory?

No. The proposed funding distribution is guidance only and may be adjusted based on community context, partner roles, and organizational capacity.

What is expected during the sustainability phase?

Partnerships should begin identifying diversified funding opportunities and sustainability strategies during implementation to support long-term continuation of the work.

Budget Guidance

Budgets should align with the scope and scale of the proposed collaborative and reflect the needs and priorities of the community. While the United Way of Rhode Island does not prescribe specific budget amounts, proposed budgets should include the resources necessary to design, coordinate, and sustain a high-functioning, place-based collaborative. This includes adequate capacity for backbone coordination, service delivery, coordinated referral pathways, and shared accountability for outcomes. Additional budget guidance and technical assistance will be provided to funded partners during the planning period.



SECTION 5. DATA, EVALUATION, & LEARNING

What kind of data systems are required?

Partners are not required to use the same platform or data system, but they must participate in shared data collection and align around common indicators.

How much reporting will be required?

United Way aims to minimize reporting burden by focusing on a small number of meaningful indicators and building on existing workflows whenever possible.

Will United Way provide evaluation support?

Yes. United Way will support partners with:

- Technical assistance
- Shared learning facilitation
- Evaluation guidance
- Support with data alignment and continuous improvement
- What outcomes will partnerships be expected to track?

Examples may include:

- Housing stability
- Income and employment changes
- Progress toward family-defined goals
- Referral effectiveness
- Coordination across partners
- How will learning and continuous improvement be supported?

All funded partnerships will participate in shared learning opportunities, reflection sessions, and communities of practice focused on collaboration and continuous improvement.

SECTION 6. APPLICATION & REVIEW PROCESS

What makes a proposal competitive?

Strong proposals will demonstrate:

- Clear coordination and defined partner roles
- A cohesive system rather than disconnected programs
- Alignment with Strong Families goals
- Feasible implementation and sustainability planning
- Community-centered and family-informed approaches



Who will review applications?

Applications will be reviewed by:

- United Way staff
- Community Investment Committee members
- Community Advisory Board members

Will there be opportunities to ask questions before applying?

Yes. United Way will host:

- Information sessions
- Virtual office hours
- Q&A opportunities with staff

Can organizations submit more than one proposal?

- No. United Way will accept one proposal per agency.

Will follow-up conversations occur during the review process?

Possibly. United Way may contact applicants for clarification or additional discussion during the review process.

SECTION 7. ALICE RESOURCES & COMMUNITY DATA

Where can I learn more about ALICE?

Additional information about ALICE data and methodology will be shared during information sessions and through supplemental resources. Please visit <https://www.unitedforalice.org/> to learn more.

How do I know if the families we serve are ALICE?

Organizations may use household income, cost-of-living data, employment status, and local community indicators to assess whether families meet ALICE thresholds. [ALICE budget and income status tool](#) and other information about ALICE can be found at <https://www.unitedforalice.org/>

What information can we use to identify communities with a high proportion of ALICE individuals and families?

Examples include:

- ALICE reports and dashboards
- Census and housing data
- School district and workforce data
- Local community needs assessments



Can proposals include visuals, maps, or community data?

Yes. Applicants are encouraged to include visuals, data, and other materials that help demonstrate community need and proposed impact.



REVIEW PROCESS

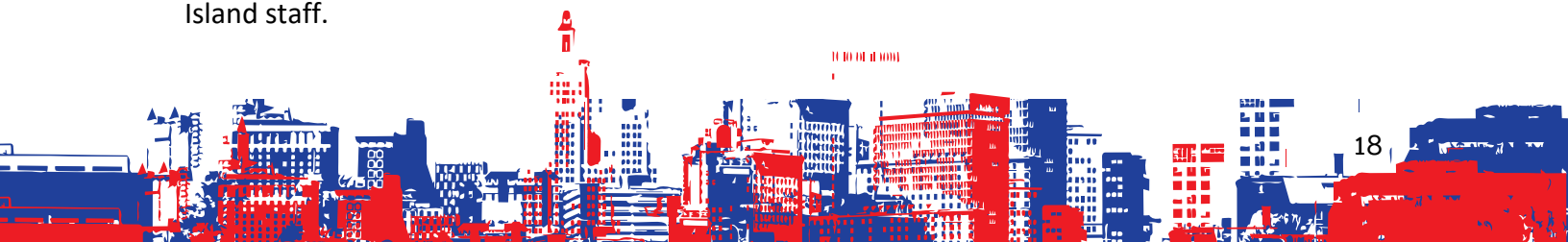
Proposals will be reviewed by United Way of Rhode Island staff and volunteer members of the Community Impact Committee (CIC), Community Advisory Board (CAB), and United Way of Rhode Island donors and external community partners. Using a scoring rubric, the review committee will evaluate proposals and submit their recommendations to Community Investment staff.

This scoring rubric is shared here for your reference.

[RUBRIC HERE](#)

INFORMATION SESSIONS

United Way of Rhode Island staff will hold four 90-minute information sessions. The information sessions will provide an overview of United Way of Rhode Island's New strategic framework, the current grant opportunity, a walkthrough of the grant application platform, expectations regarding evaluation and learning, and an overview of the application process and anticipated timeline. There will also be time for Q&A with United Way of Rhode Island staff.



- Friday, July 17, 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., in-person @50 Valley Street, Providence
- Monday, July 20, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., in-person @50 Valley Street, Providence
- Wednesday, July 22, 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., virtual, please register to receive the meeting link
- Friday, July 24, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., virtual, please register to receive the meeting link

[Click here to register.](#)

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

In addition to the information sessions, staff will hold virtual office hours via Zoom at the following dates and times:

- Wednesday, July 29, 2026, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, August 4, 2026, 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
- Thursday, August 20, 2026, 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

[Click here to register.](#)

FULL APPLICATION

Applications will be due on September 3rd.

Reviewers will use this [scoring rubric](#), which is also provided to all partners.

The review committee will evaluate proposals and submit their recommendations to United Way of Rhode Island staff and Community Investment Committee for final approval.

The United Way of Rhode Island may reach out to hold follow-up phone calls or virtual meetings with applicants, if necessary. Please be sure to include up-to-date contact information in the grant application.

The United Way of Rhode Island will notify applicants of funding decisions.



PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

Begin the application process:

- Visit our website for more information.
- Access the application portal [here](#).
- United Way of Rhode Island will only accept one proposal per collaborative/community.

Note: If you have not created an account since Fall of 2020 on United Way's grantmaking platform you will need to do so for this funding opportunity.

If there are any questions related to accessing the application portal, please contact Ruth Saah ruth.saah@unitedwayri.org

TIMELINE

Begin the application process:

- **RFP Release**
 - Tuesday, July 14, 2026
- **RFP information sessions**
 - Friday, July 17, 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. - in-person @50 Valley Street, Providence
 - Monday, July 20, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. - in-person @50 Valley Street, Providence
 - Wednesday, July 22, 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. - virtual, please register to receive the meeting link
 - Friday, July 24, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., virtual, please register to receive the meeting link
- **Office hours**
 - Friday, July 29, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., virtual
 - Tuesday, August 4, 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., virtual
 - Thursday, August 20, 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., virtual
- **Application deadline**
 - Thursday, September 3, 2026 11:59 p.m.
- **Grantees notified of decision, Contracts signed, etc.**
 - October, 2026
- **Planning period commences**
 - November, 2026



QUESTIONS

Content, eligibility, technical questions or general inquiries can be directed to Roshni Darnal roshni.darnal@unitedway.org and Ruth Saah ruth.saah@unitedwayri.org.

