



UNITED WAY
Greater St. Louis

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT 2027: 2027-2029 SAFETY NET FUNDING CYCLE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are provided as additional context for prospective applicants about the 2027-2029 Safety Net Funding Cycle. For more information, please visit [Agency HQ](#) for details about all funding opportunities available with United Way of Greater St. Louis.

What is the Safety Net?

The Safety Net is a collaborative network of agencies that deliver an array of essential direct services to address the region's immediate and most pressing needs by helping families and individuals work toward stability.

Safety net agencies provide direct services that address basic, urgent needs—such as access to food, access to housing, in addition to supports to move individuals and families toward stability like education, addressing health and well-being, accessing the workforce or attaining financial mobility.

The composition of the Safety Net network aims to address gaps in services that residents may experience on a daily basis. The Safety Net is considered a member agency of United Way of Greater St. Louis aligned to advance the mission of United Way across its 16 county region.

How long will the contract period be for the next Safety Net member agency cohort?

The contract for the next Safety Net cohort will be for three years (3) beginning in 2027 and concluding in 2029.

What are the required membership expectations for the next Safety Net member agency cohort?

Agencies selected for United Way Safety Net Membership will be required to meet the following contract requirements during the three (3) year contract timeframe.

All applicants should note that acceptance of the funding award and contract means that the agency will adhere to these contract requirements in alignment and partnership with United Way. More details on each area noted can be found in the 2027-2029 Safety Net Funding Cycle Application found [here](#).

- Conduct an Workplace United Way Community Campaign Annually
- Co-branding with United Way
- Submit Annual Impact Reporting



- Participate in Site Visits
- Maintain a 211 Profile and Updates
- Actively Engage Community Information Exchange (CIE)

What are the basic eligibility requirements for Safety Net funding cycle consideration?

To be considered for funding with United Way, an organization must meet the criteria noted below. More details on each area noted can be found in the 2027-2029 Safety Net Funding Cycle Application.

- Provide direct services to individuals living in at least one of the counties in United Way's 16-county footprint
- Be a nonprofit recognized by the IRS as 501(c)3 for at least two years prior to application submission
- Be in good standing with the states of Missouri or Illinois
- Have an established policy aligning with US Patriot Act and other counterterrorism laws
- Have an established policy background check policy which includes child abuse and neglect screening
- Have an established policy on non-discrimination in hiring and service delivery
- Have established privacy protection practices required for services provided as required by law. (HIPAA, FERPA, etc.)
- Conducts a financial audit or review from a third-party financial professional such as a CPA

What is new about the Safety Net Funding process?

The 2027-2029 Safety Net cycle application includes a detailed description clarifying for applicants the definition of the Safety Net network and expectations for prospective member agencies if awarded a contract.

Additionally, this cycle is open to both currently funded 2024-2026 Safety Net member agencies and eligible nonprofits serving United Way's 16-county region that meet the funding criteria for this cycle.

Lastly, to support enhancement of how United Way measures and communicates community impact, applicants will select a singular United Way of Greater St. Louis impact area. The application will detail an agency's capacity and demonstrated experience to drive community level change that advances that singular impact area. Funded member agencies will commit to accountability of change for constituents served during the course of the three-year contract timeframe, regardless of the breadth of services a singular applicant may provide to community. Once funded, member agencies may be invited via



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subsequent impact reporting to share details about programs in another applicable United Way impact area beyond those selected for this funding cycle application.

Can I apply to be a Safety Net member agency if my organization has never been funded by United Way?

Yes – the 2027-2029 Safety Net Funding cycle is open to eligible nonprofits serving United Way’s 16-county region that meet the funding criteria for this cycle.

What are the funding ranges that applicants could be awarded if selected?

The minimum amount that an agency may be awarded is \$50,000; the maximum is \$1,500,000. For new applicants not currently funded within the Safety Net, an agency may be awarded between \$50,000 - \$100,000. Funding requests for all applicants may not exceed more than 20% of the applicant’s programmatic budget for which funding is being requested.

Final funding level determinations will be based on review of the submitted application, performance, and recommendation of United Way’s volunteer Regional Investment Committee. Initial funding awards may vary in subsequent years based on attainment from the annual Community Campaign, with United Way guaranteeing at least a minimum of 90% of the prior year’s allocation from year to year.

What are United Way’s Impact Areas?

United Way’s Impact Areas (listed below) are informed by periodic landscape and community needs assessments. Based on the results of those assessments, United Way identifies and then categorizes the top needs under the impact areas. United Way then highlights shifts in change at an aggregate level. More details about the Impact areas can be found in the 2027-2029 Safety Net Funding Cycle Application.

- Basic Needs
- Community Stability and Crisis Response
- Early Childhood and Youth Success
- Health and Wellbeing
- Jobs and Financial Mobility

While needs are great across the five impact areas, United Way will use data derived from its landscape analysis of community needs to inform how service areas will be prioritized to ensure the region has access to a strong and resilient network as needs arise.

Can more than one application request be submitted for consideration under this funding cycle for more than one impact area?



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Applicants may submit a maximum of one singular application per agency for this funding cycle.

Is Safety Net funding available specifically for programs?

United Way offers flexible funding across its available funding opportunities. Applicants can either apply for General Operating Support or Program Specific support as part of its submission.

General Operating Support would fund an agency's operations including but not limited to activities associated with the impact area selected as part of the agency's funding request.

Program Specific support is available for any applicant that prefers to use or allocate the requested funds for specific program associated with the impact area selected as part of the agency's funding request. This option is typically useful for applicants that aim to restrict the use of funds and align to the intent of the application.

What is United Way's funding investment strategy?

United Way's community investment model starts with the needs of the community and aligns funding decisions to help meet those needs. When we look at needs, we know that many are interconnected: when an individual doesn't have access to transportation, it's difficult to get to a job; when children are hungry, they're less successful in school. United Way aims to have an interconnected approach to its funding strategy to have the greatest regional impact.

For this cycle the following regional and national data sets informed the updates of community needs: 211 Counts Dashboard, American Community Survey or ACS, County Health Rankings, and Vital Statistics comparing data since the 2020 needs assessment was conducted.

What counties does United Way serve?

Our service area is detailed [here](#) on our website. The complete list of 16 counties is noted by state:

In Illinois - Calhoun, Clinton, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, and St. Clair counties.

In Missouri - Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, St. Charles, St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and Warren counties.

Who selects the Safety Net agencies?

Dozens of community members from across the region volunteer to review and score funding cycle applications. Additional review and deliberation is conducted by volunteers on our Regional Investment Committee and Executive Committee to help us determine the Safety Net agencies.

Is there a required timeframe for the required Certificate of Good Standing with the Secretary of State?



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Yes – Applicants uploaded certificates must be dated on or before October 17, 2025. Agencies providing services in Missouri and Illinois need only provide a certificate for the state based on the location of their agency headquarters.

How long must an applicant be in operation in order to meet the eligibility to apply for funding through United Way?

An applicant organization and the programs that will be associated with its submission must be recognized by the IRS as a 501 c 3 with programming in operation at least for two years prior to submission.

Our organization does not have a financial audit, can we still apply?

Review of third-party financial audits are one tool to illustrate how United Way monitors the financial health of its member agency network.

For consideration of the funding cycle, organizations with budgets less than \$250,000 may provide narrative justification for not obtaining a formal financial audit and, in lieu of a formal financial audit, submit 1) narrative justification, 2) the agency’s most recent 990 or 990 EZ, and 3) a third-party financial compilation report.

All applicants should be aware that if funded, the agency will be required to conduct either an annual compilation or a full financial audit by a third-party independent auditor.

Will United Way offer any additional funding opportunities in 2026?

Yes, a Targeted Fund cycle will launch in the fall of 2026 for program implementation in 2027.

United Way offers three tiers of funding opportunities to support local nonprofits with a proven ability to meet the community’s needs and make a lasting, important impact in the region. Interested applicants can [sign up here](#) to receive notifications of future opportunities when available. For the most up to date details on funding opportunities with United Way, visit [Agency HQ](#) on our website.