PURPOSE

United Way of Greenville County (UWGC) has seen extensive change over the past decade. As an organization we have grown exponentially alongside the county in which we reside. Our mission, moving people out of poverty, has remained the same throughout the years, but the way in which we fund, scale, and build capacity is changing rapidly. Even in this last week, as we coordinate and distribute funding in response to the COVID-19 crisis, we are continuously learning how to be better and more effective.

Our goal is not an end result but rather a thoughtful evolution based on careful deliberation, research, and conversation.

To this objective, we are releasing a new Request for Proposals (RFP) to the Greenville County community. This past year we have taken a close look at the totality of our work and how it relates to the complete ecosystem of Greenville County. Through this, we have three core strategic objectives:

- Serving our community, lifting up its strengths and investing in organizations
- Keeping a local focus; donations support our work in Greenville County
- Connecting donors’ passions with community opportunity, serving as the partner of choice as donors seek to achieve collective community impact.

OUR JOURNEY

Over the past year, United Way has tapped into existing research and data and commissioned several reports to gather additional data that provides a clear and comprehensive picture of the current situation in Greenville County as it relates to people experiencing poverty. We have also sought extensive community input that tells the story of our neighbors’ daily experience. From this, we know that while Greenville is thriving on many measures, we still have significant challenges, and the opportunity to do well is not evenly distributed. In fact, community residents are most concerned with equal access to opportunities and resources that would forge a greater sense of unity and greater wellbeing for everyone. In 38 conversations with residents across Greenville County, every single group raised issues related to equal access and opportunity, especially for people experiencing poverty, people of color, and other marginalized populations.
CURRENT SITUATION IN GREENVILLE COUNTY

As we compiled all of the data, the following themes emerged as critical needs right now and into our collective future.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Financial stability is an elusive dream for many of our neighbors. More than 17,400 Greenville County families have income less than $25,000 per year. Almost 21,500 of our children, or 19%, live in poverty. Poverty is concentrated in communities of color with 19% of black residents and 24% of Hispanic residents living in poverty, compared to 9% of white residents. Worries about the affordability of necessities like housing and childcare, along with the general cost of living, are common to almost every community across Greenville County.

More than 14,000 households in Greenville pay 50% or more of their monthly income to rent. This vulnerability is compounded by the fact that South Carolina has the highest eviction rate in the United States. Even when income is sufficient to get by, many of our neighbors are unable to access and build wealth resources, such as homeownership and savings, over time. Moreover, assets are not available to pass on to children for intergenerational wealth-building that breaks cycles of financial instability. This “asset poverty” is more persistent and prevalent in Greenville County than income poverty, putting families at significant risk of financial crisis in case of unforeseen expenses or emergencies. This creates an unstable home life resulting in negative impacts on education and employment outcomes.

EDUCATION

Education is the most robust predictor of financial stability, but 12% of our adult residents (age 25+) do not have a high school credential, and only 35% hold a bachelor’s or graduate degree. And education attainment is not evenly distributed – only 16% black residents and 18% of Hispanic residents hold bachelor’s degrees, compared to 40% of white residents.

Although our children are generally doing better than their peers across the state on average, their outcomes on critical education milestones remain a challenge: 39% of our third-graders are not reading on grade level, and by eighth grade, it has increased to 50% on meeting the state standard for English/Language Arts. Additionally, 57% of our eighth-graders fail to meet state standards in math. Black and Hispanic children fare significantly worse than white children on all of these measures. In conversations with groups of students, parents, educators, and other individuals engaged in work around education and childhood, many felt the weight of a large variety of issues holding children back in school. They identified everything from a lack of mental health resources to the difficulty of parents engaging in education while experiencing poverty as barriers to success in education.

WORKFORCE

Greenville County is experiencing historically low unemployment rates; however, the conditions and structural supports for employment, like access to transportation and affordable housing, varies widely across the county. In some communities in Greenville County, residents stated that employment opportunities in their neighborhood were scarce and what few options were available were not capable of sustaining most individuals or their families. This meant that for many in these communities, the ability to find and maintain gainful employment was dependent on the individual’s circumstances.

This, in addition to disparate educational outcomes, means that although whites are the least likely demographic to be in the labor force proportionately, they have a lower unemployment rate, compared to blacks. And white males are the only demographic in Greenville County whose wages, on average, would support himself and one child.
STEP 1 — Theory of Change Statement for 2021 Investment Cycle

To increase educational opportunities and economic security for marginalized, disconnected communities and reduce social, financial, and economic barriers, United Way of Greenville County will support community efforts around education and financial stability to ensure economic mobility for all.

- **Investment Values**
  Creating equitable outcomes for our community is increasingly complex and demanding. To serve as a compass for the 2021 investment cycle, United Way will adhere to the following values and integrate these values in every aspect of the process, including review of proposals, volunteer and staff engagement, and eligibility and investment decisions.

- **Measurable and Meaningful Results**
  UWGC will demonstrate a commitment to data-driven decision making and invest in providers that do the same. Providers should use data to demonstrate effectiveness, inform program implementation and improvement, and commit to results-driven behavior.

- **Strategic Alignment**
  Providers should demonstrate a strong theory of change that aligns with United Way’s approach to the Cycle of Success, including a description of intermediary and long-term outcomes, activities, strategies, and assumptions needed to affect change in order to reach those outcomes.

- **Equity**
  In an intentional effort to maximize its resources to achieve equitable outcomes for those living in Greenville County, UWGC will use a cross-sector approach to address and remedy racial, economic and educational disparities. By leveraging expertise within and outside United Way to inform strategies, UWGC will invest in organizations that are committed to equitable and inclusive practices, and provide services to reduce disparities and support marginalized and disconnected communities.

- **Access and Opportunity**
  UWGC will be intentional about understanding the community, its strengths, and its needs in relation to United Way’s focus areas. UWGC and its partner providers will address the unique barriers and challenges that impact marginalized and disconnected communities and work to make resources and services as accessible to these communities as possible.
STEP 2 — Documentation and Community Engagement

United Way understands that large volumes of data from various sources best informs communities that are undergoing vast, rapid changes in community context. That in mind, UWGC has engaged local institutions and community organizations to collect information that will inform investment strategies and tactics, provide deeper learning opportunities for community partners, and help measure progress toward impact.

- **Race and Economic Mobility Index**
  A comprehensive analysis of demographic and wellbeing data that reflects community conditions related to racial equity in Greenville County with emphasis on how this data predict economic mobility by race.

- **Harwood Model Community Conversations**
  A qualitative data collection and analysis framework used to inform strategy development by “turning outward” and creating spaces for organic conversations amongst diverse community populations. Questions used in the model focused on soliciting feedback from community members regarding their aspirations, identification of barriers/challenges, and how they perceive progress.

- **Focus Groups**
  A qualitative data collection and analysis framework designed to elicit feedback to assess the role and perception of UWGC as an organization and investment strategies.

- **Neighborhood Change Study**
  A study to better understand gentrification and displacement in Greenville County neighborhoods, better understand what can be done to mitigate negative consequences of change, and better serve populations that require support now and in the future.

- **Prosperity Now Scorecard**
  A data set that measures Greenville County’s financial health and whether opportunities to prosper are equitable for all community members.

- **UWGC Data Analysis**
  A community impact assessment of investment strategies, outcome measurements, and impact of funded programs and partners.

- **Network for Southern Economic Mobility**
  A learning network of seven cities in the Southeast purposed to identify best practices and develop strategies for increasing the odds of economic mobility for marginalized communities.

- **Community Needs Assessment**
  A compilation of 25 needs assessments covering areas of housing, healthcare, transportation, education, etc.
**RATIONALĘ**

**STEP 3 – Strategy**

**SOLUTIONS INCUBATOR MODEL**

This model outlines an idea of how United Way of Greenville County can present themselves to the community regarding its role as a funder, partner and convener.

**THEORY OF CHANGE**

**UWGC as a “SOLUTIONS INCUBATOR”**

**SUSTAIN**
- School-Readiness
- High School Graduation
- Financial Stability
- For example: nonprofit investments, VITA, policy and advocacy

**REIMAGINE**
- Space for innovation
- Implementing evidence and research-based models and approaches
- For example: OnTrack, VITA Center, AmeriCorps

**EXPERIMENT**
- Testing new approaches with partner and community member input
- For example: Data Project

- United Way as **Sustainer**

Program partners that are awarded sustained funding have developed strategies that align with United Way’s former Cycle of Success, roadmap strategies, and economic mobility for marginalized communities. Program outcomes and outputs should be supported by data and must demonstrate impact. UWGC will continue to support other programs that provide basic services such as food, shelter, utilities, or financial assistance for vulnerable families and individuals.

- United Way as **a Re-Imaginator**

This particular role allows space for United Way to fund innovative services, practices, and/or models. These are not novel programs but proven, measurable services and practices that encourage the desire and space for rethinking how programs and services are delivered. One example is United Way’s current investment in the integrated service delivery model which helped streamline and improve service delivery to numerous families and individuals. This rethinking may also include:
  - providing services with a trauma-informed lens
  - providing services with a racial equity lens
  - cross-sector services
  - cross-organizational, wraparound services
  - aiming to address issues with permanency

- United Way as **Experimenter**

This role provides space for United Way and partners to test new ideas, iterate, and fail forward. Here we test new approaches to community work with community and partner input being central to implementation. United Way fulfills this role by continually convening community for idea creation and feedback. This role requires that we embrace continuous learning and anticipate failure toward and through learning. United Way has a long track record as experimenter and invested in initiatives like a low income credit union and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program.

United Way serves as a funder, partner, and convener working with the entire community to build resources, focus investments and foster partnerships that create lasting solutions to major issues.

Given the changing context of Greenville County and United Way’s need to shift and adapt to evolving corporate and philanthropic environments, through a holistic investment portfolio that focuses on equitable outcomes, United Way will continue to position itself as not only a grant maker in the community, but also a catalyst and change maker.
The following are strategies developed from extensive community conversations, data collection, and discourse.

**FINANCIAL STABILITY**

**Workforce Development**
United Way will invest in organizations that demonstrate results in increased enrollment in and completion of a relevant degree, certification, and labor market training programs that lead to self-sustaining employment.

**Safety Net**
United Way will fund organizations that demonstrate results around removing situational barriers to economic mobility — namely stable affordable housing, financial assistance, safety-net supports, and intensive case-management.

**Gaining and Building Assets**
United Way will fund organizations that demonstrate results connecting working families/individuals to financial products and services that promote savings and investment behavior (e.g. VITA, IDA) through the use of public and private incentives.

**Income Supports**
United Way will fund organizations that provide financial buffers and incentives for individuals at risk of experiencing cliff effects or predatory financial services practices.

**EDUCATION**

**Safe and Nurturing Environments**
United Way will invest in organizations that demonstrate measurable impact in building, training, and/or are seeking to establish environments and services that are trauma-informed, build resiliency, and focused on the prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES).

**Out of School Time Interventions**
United Way will invest in multipurpose, high-quality Out-of-School-Time (OST) programming/curriculum that young people can regularly attend when school is not in session.

**Support Networks**
United Way will fund organizations that cultivate and sustain social capital for underserved, marginalized community members and provide access to resources and opportunities in Greenville County.

**Academic Supports**
United Way will fund organizations that provide educational opportunities in literacy, academic tutoring, and specially designed learning experiences that prepare individuals with the skills needed to enter post-secondary institutions and the workforce.

**Early Learning and Childcare**
United Way will fund organizations that enhance early learning and/or provide high-quality childcare for ages 0–5 to ensure children enter school ready to learn.

**Post-secondary Skills**
United Way will fund organizations that bridge the skills gap between high school and post-secondary education, increasing earning power, agility in workforce changes, and the ability to invest in one's own community.

**VIBRANT AND EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES**

United Way will invest in foundational initiatives and strategies that build community-level and systems-level partnerships, strengthen the capacity of the nonprofit sector, and help achieve equitable outcomes for everyone in our community. To also include:

- Systems-Level Partnerships
- Capacity-Building Initiatives
- Community Engagement and Convening Efforts

**Basic Needs**
United Way will invest in organizations that meet basic human needs that ensure safety and survival.
### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION:</th>
<th>DATE:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Partner Meeting</td>
<td>March 31, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept Paper &amp; FAQ Release</td>
<td>May 8, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Needs Assessment Release</td>
<td>May 15, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request for Proposals (RFP) Release</td>
<td>May 18, 2020</td>
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<td>Pre-Qualifications and RFP Due</td>
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<td>Site Visits</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
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<td>Award Notification</td>
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