

Community Impact Grant Evaluation Tool

Community Impact Grants – Program Year: January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026

Through the Community Impact fund, United Way of Northern New York (UWNNY) provides funding support to a wide range of human service programs. The grant application process is competitive, as community needs outweigh available resources. Priority is given to organizations and proposals that:

- Focus on underserved and underrepresented populations and / or unmet needs.
- Utilize a collaborative approach to service delivery.
- Serve working households defined as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed) and/or those living in poverty.

Objective of Community Impact Fund

To support programs providing services to residents of Jefferson, Lewis and/or St. Lawrence Counties that align with at least one of the primary areas of focus:

Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) – interventions / strategies addressing SDoH, including, but not limited to, access to nutrition, housing, healthcare, literacy / language, education, and transportation.

Child / Youth Success – programming that provides vital supplies and support necessary to academic success, growth and development, and a healthy successful transition into adulthood.

Economic Stability – short- and long-term strategies to help people gain or maintain stability, including job skills training, soft skills development, and support to those at risk of falling into poverty.

Community Review Process

1. Application Submission – Eligible organizations submit grant applications through an online portal by the specified deadline (August 29, 2025).
2. Internal Review – Upon submission, applications undergo an initial review by UWNNY staff to ensure completeness and eligibility based on the criteria outlined in the grant guidelines.
3. Assignment to Reviewers – Eligible applications are then assigned to a diverse group of volunteer reviewers, representing various community sectors, including business, education, healthcare, public sector, and graduates of the “Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin’-by World” workshop series.
4. Individual Review – Each application is reviewed based on the standardized scoring rubric. To ensure a balanced and fair assessment and minimize individual biases, each application is reviewed by multiple volunteers independently with individual scores averaged to produce a final score. For those applicants that receive recurring funding, staff assess the applicant’s commitment to partnership with UWNNY.
5. Community Review Panel Meetings – After individual reviews are completed and tallied, review panels convene to discuss the evaluations. These panels provide an opportunity for reviewers to share insights, ask questions, and deliberate on the applications collectively.
6. Recommendations – Based on the final averaged scores and panel discussions, the review panels make funding recommendations which are submitted to the UWNNY Board of Directors. The Board makes the final decision on grant awards, ensuring alignment with organizational goals and priorities.
7. Award Notification / Feedback – Applicants are notified of funding decisions. Successful applicants receive detailed information about their grant award, reporting requirements, and partnership expectations. Grantees are required to sign the partnership agreement and submit all requested documentation. Upon request, feedback is provided to applicants, including those not selected for funding, to support continuous improvement and future application efforts.

Community Impact Grant Scoring Rubric

The following tool is designed for use by volunteer grant reviewers. Each section is scored along a continuum of 1 through 5, with 1 being insufficient and 5 being exemplary. Reviewers are encouraged to provide comments and feedback for each score to support the evaluation process. The question regarding applicant commitment to partnership with UWNKY is scored by UWNKY staff.

FOR ALL APPLICATIONS

1. Reviewer Name: _____

2. Applicant (Organization / Program Name): _____

3. Please rate the alignment of the proposal with the specified area(s) of focus (listed above).

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The proposal lacks a clear connection to the area(s) of focus.	The proposal could benefit from a stronger connection to the area(s) of focus.	The proposal demonstrates a reasonable alignment with the area(s) of focus.	The proposal provides a clear connection between the project / program and the area(s) of focus, with room for fine-tuning.	The proposal clearly demonstrates how the program / project directly addresses the area(s) of focus.

4. Please rate the clarity and coherence of the proposal in effectively communicating the program/project and its intended goals, strategies, and outcomes.

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The application lacks clear organization and coherence. It does not effectively communicate the goals, strategies, or anticipated outcomes. There may be significant gaps or confusion in the content.	The application is somewhat organized, but there are areas where further clarification or detail is needed. Some aspects of the goals, strategies, or anticipated outcomes may not be fully explained.	The application is generally well-organized and presents a clear overview of the project. It provides sufficient information about the goals, strategies, and anticipated outcomes. Additional detail or clarity could strengthen the application.	The application is well-structured and provides a clear overview of the project. It effectively communicates the goals, strategies, and anticipated outcomes. The content is comprehensive but minor additional detail could enhance the application.	The application is exceptionally well-organized, clear, and comprehensive. It provides a thorough understanding of the goals, strategies, and anticipated outcomes. All necessary information is included, and there is a clear and logical flow to the content.

5. Please rate the proposal's specificity regarding expected outcomes, as well as the understanding of the potential impact of the project.

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The proposal does not provide clear, specific, or measurable expected outcomes. There is a lack of understanding or articulation of the potential impact of the project.	The proposal lacks specificity regarding expected outcomes and impact. While there is some indication of potential impact, the outcomes are not well-defined or measurable.	The proposal generally outlines expected outcomes, but there may be areas where greater specificity or detail is needed.	The proposal demonstrates a good understanding of the potential impact, but some outcomes could be more specific or well-defined.	The proposal provides a clear and detailed description of the expected outcomes and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the potential impact.

6. Please rate the organization's capacity to successfully implement the project.

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The organization lacks the necessary capacity to successfully implement the project. The proposal does not provide sufficient evidence of the organization's ability to carry out the project effectively.	The organization's capacity to implement the project is somewhat uncertain. There are areas where additional resources or support will be crucial for successful implementation. The proposal highlights some capacity, but there are significant gaps.	The organization has the necessary capacity to implement the project, but there may be areas that could benefit from additional resources or support. The proposal provides reasonable evidence of the organization's capacity.	The organization has the basic capacity, but there may be areas where additional support or resources are needed. The proposal demonstrates a good foundation for project implementation, with some room for improvement in certain areas of capacity.	The organization demonstrates strong capacity, including financial stability, experienced staff, and appropriate infrastructure to successfully implement the project. The proposal provides robust evidence of the organization's ability to carry out the project effectively.

7. Please rate the clarity, realism, and alignment of the program/project budget with the stated goals and activities.

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The budget is unclear, unrealistic, or does not align with the program / project goals and activities. There is a lack of evidence or justification for the proposed expenses.	The budget is somewhat unclear or may contain unrealistic elements. There are areas where additional explanation or justification is needed to demonstrate alignment with the program / project goals.	The budget is reasonable and aligns with the program / project goals and activities. Some line items may benefit from further clarification or detail.	The budget is generally sound, but there may be areas where further explanation or justification is needed. Overall, it aligns well with the program / project goals and activities.	The budget is well-structured, reasonable, and aligns closely with the program / project goals and activities. Expenses are clearly justified, and there is evidence of careful financial planning.

8. Is the amount of funding requested greater than \$5,000?

If YES, answer questions 9 through 14.

If NO, skip to question 13 and 14.

ADDITIONAL METRICS FOR APPLICATIONS IN EXCESS OF \$5,000

9. Please rate how well the proposal explains how the organization distinguishes itself from potential counterparts offering similar programming.

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The proposal indicates a lack of understanding or articulation of how the organization distinguishes itself from potential counterparts.	The proposal acknowledges the presence of similar organizations, but the explanation of how the organization differs may be somewhat vague or underdeveloped.	The proposal provides a satisfactory explanation of how the organization differs from their counterparts, though there may be room for further detail or specificity.	The proposal includes a well-articulated explanation of how the organization differs from their counterparts, highlighting key differentiators that set it apart.	The proposal includes a clear, compelling explanation of how the organization distinguishes itself from others, highlighting unique services, approaches, or target populations served.

10. Please rate how well the proposal addresses collaborations with other organizations and describes the impact on client success.

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The proposal does not adequately address or list collaborating organizations, or it provides no indication of specific collaborative efforts. There may be a lack of understanding or articulation of the benefits of collaboration.	The proposal acknowledges collaborations with other organizations, but the list or explanation may be somewhat limited or lacking detail. The description of collaborative efforts and their impact on client success may be somewhat vague or underdeveloped.	The proposal presents a reasonable list of collaborating organizations and provides a satisfactory explanation of how these collaborations improve client success. There may be areas where further detail or specificity could enhance the description.	The proposal provides a thorough list of collaborating organizations and offers a well-articulated description of how these collaborations contribute to client success. It demonstrates a clear understanding of the benefits of collaboration.	The proposal provides a comprehensive list of collaborating organizations and offers a detailed and compelling description of how these collaborations enhance the probability of success for clients. It highlights specific collaborative efforts, strategies, and outcomes achieved.

11. Based on your review of the organizational budget and accompanying financial documents, please rate the organization’s overall financial health and sustainability.

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
Based on my review of the financial documents, there are concerns about the organization's financial health. It may struggle to maintain a diverse income, have difficulties covering expenses in its budget, and might not be operating with a positive financial outcome.	Based on my review of the financial documents, there are areas where the organization can improve its financial health. It may be working to diversify its income sources and balance its budget, but more progress is needed to ensure sustainability and a positive financial outcome.	Based on my review of the financial documents, it appears that the organization is managing its finances reasonably well. It shows efforts to diversify income, maintain a balanced budget, and achieve a positive bottom line, demonstrating some level of sustainability.	Based on my review of the financial documents, there are strong signs that the organization is doing well financially. It has diverse income sources, maintains a balanced budget, and consistently achieves a positive financial outcome, ensuring sustainability.	Based on my review of the financial documents, the organization excels in managing its finances. It showcases a diverse range of income sources, maintains a balanced budget, and consistently achieves a positive bottom line, ensuring long-term sustainability.

12. Please evaluate the organization's innovative, entrepreneurial, and “outside the box” efforts to address community challenges.

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The proposal does not highlight the organization's efforts to address community challenges lack innovation, entrepreneurship, and “outside the box” thinking. There is little evidence of creative or unconventional approaches.	The proposal indicates that the organization is making some initial strides in innovatively and entrepreneurially addressing community challenges. However, there is room for further development and more “outside the box” thinking.	The proposal indicates that the organization demonstrates reasonable innovation, entrepreneurship, and “outside the box” thinking in addressing community challenges. Efforts are in place, but there may be opportunities for expansion or refinement.	The proposal indicates that the organization exhibits strong innovation, entrepreneurship, and a propensity for “outside the box” thinking in addressing community challenges. Creative approaches are evident and contribute to effective problem-solving, often with unique perspectives.	The proposal indicates that the organization excels in innovative, entrepreneurial, and “outside the box” efforts to address community challenges. It consistently employs inventive, entrepreneurial, and unconventional strategies that lead to significant positive outcomes and innovative solutions.

FOR ALL APPLICATIONS

13. Based on your knowledge of the organization and the contents of the proposal, please rate how well the program addresses community need(s), demonstrates a return on investment and makes use of funds entrusted to the United Way.

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The program inadequately addresses community need(s) and offers little in the way of return on investment. There may be uncertainties regarding the program's effectiveness in utilizing funds entrusted to the United Way.	There are some indications that the program addresses community need(s) and offers a reasonable return on investment. However, there may be areas where further detail or clarification is needed to ensure effective use of funds entrusted to the United Way.	The program has the potential to address community need(s), offers a solid return on investment, and deploys a thoughtful approach to utilizing funds entrusted to the United Way.	The program adequately addresses community need(s), offers a strong return on investment, and demonstrates good stewardship of the funds entrusted to the United Way.	The program effectively addresses community need(s), offers an exceptional return on investment, and demonstrates a high level of effectiveness in utilizing funds entrusted to the United Way.

14. Please share any comments relating to the applicant or the proposed program / project.

COMPLETED BY UWNKY STAFF – Applicable to organizations that have received funding for 3 consecutive years.

15. Please rate the applicant's commitment to actively partnering with UWNKY on addressing community needs, communicating with UWNKY, and supporting UWNKY initiatives, including fundraising, marketing, and community engagement efforts (as outlined in the partnership agreement).

1 – Insufficient	2 – Developing	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Strong	5 – Exemplary
The applicant shows minimal commitment to partnering with UWNKY and does not meet the expectations outlined in the partnership agreement.	The applicant demonstrates some commitment to partnering with UWNKY but has incomplete or limited plans to meet the outlined expectations.	The applicant shows a reasonable commitment to partnering with UWNKY, meeting several outlined expectations, but there is room for improvement.	The applicant demonstrates a strong commitment to partnering with UWNKY, effectively meeting most of the outlined expectations and showing proactive engagement.	The applicant exemplifies an outstanding commitment to partnering with UWNKY, fully meeting all outlined expectations and demonstrating high levels of engagement and collaboration.