



United Way
Centraide
Simcoe Muskoka

Resource Guide



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Gratitude for Indigenous Land

Historically, when communities would come together to a particular area, the visitors would acknowledge the keepers of the land, as it was to show respect. United Way Simcoe Muskoka (UWSM) is thankful to be situated on Indigenous land. This land has been in the care of generations of Indigenous peoples who are the original stewards and caretakers.

The Town of the Blue Mountains is located within the boundary of Treaty 18, which is the traditional land of the Anishnaabe, Haudenosaunee and Went-Wayandottee peoples. is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabe people. The Anishinaabe include the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi nations, collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy. The District Municipality of Muskoka is the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Chippewa and Wahta Mohawk. As settlers, the recognition, contributions, and historic importance of Indigenous peoples must be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Commitment

United Way Simcoe Muskoka is committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigenous, Metis and Inuit collaboration as an organizational priority. We strive to create and foster a supportive learning environment where everyone demonstrates and is accountable for diversity, decolonization, anti-racism, equity, and inclusion. We are committed to employing the best people to do the best job possible, in which all individuals realize their maximum potential within the organization.

Our organization's success relies on the quality and skill of our employees, volunteers, and board members, working together to reduce inequities, stigmas, and racism in our organization. By embracing across-the-board inclusiveness, we foster a stronger environment that is productive, dignified, sustainable, and ultimately beneficial to the organization and all who are involved with it. Only through diversity of participation can we bring the full range of perspectives and viewpoints to our endeavors, allowing us to make a larger difference in the communities we serve.

It is the responsibility of everyone at United Way Simcoe Muskoka to sustain a culture of respect that supports principles of diversity, equity, and inclusivity.



Our Approach to Community Impact

Our approach to community impact is grounded in a clear mission:

To improve lives and build communities by leveraging collective resources and mobilizing collective action to achieve the greatest impact.

Our work brings together people and organizations in the private, public and social sectors to meet community needs and tackle complex social issues.

To realize this, we concentrate our efforts on three priority impact areas that are essential to driving positive impact and creating lasting social change.

All That Kids Can Be

Resilience in children and youth through emotional wellbeing, because we know that helping to prevent and mitigate adverse childhood experiences is both urgent and foundational to lifelong potential.

Healthy People, Thriving Communities

Belonging, inclusion, and connection to supports in community, because we know that isolation, mental health, and informal and formal supports continue to be critical needs.

From Poverty To Possibility

Aligned collaborative supports for food, housing, and financial security, because we know individuals and families need comprehensive opportunities to stabilize, recover, and build their futures.

At the heart of our approach is a commitment to local solutions. We invest in community-led initiatives and work closely with a diverse network of organizations—both funded and unfunded by United Way Simcoe Muskoka—to support individuals and groups facing systemic barriers. Our work emphasizes empowering those closest to the issues, ensuring that solutions are informed by lived expertise and grounded in local context. Through this localized, inclusive lens, we aim to strengthen community resilience and create pathways for more equitable outcomes. We also recognize that meaningful impact requires more than funding alone. Our partnerships are rooted in a trust-based philanthropic model that prioritizes flexibility, responsiveness, and long-term relationship-building. Rather than acting as a transactional funder, we strive to be an active partner, reducing barriers to supports and connections while adapting to evolving community needs. Throughout the granting period, we aim to foster authentic relationships that enable open dialogue and shared learning.



Introduction

Achieving true poverty reduction requires collective action. At United Way Simcoe Muskoka we believe that lasting change happens when we work together. That is why, in partnership with our Community Investment and Engagement Standing Committee, we are thrilled to invite eligible organizations to apply for our three-year Community Collaborative funding initiative.

This multi-year funding represents powerful, multi-partner, and multi-sector collaborations dedicated to driving systemic poverty reduction and promoting deep social inclusion across our regions.

We are actively seeking impact-driven, innovative projects designed to transform our communities across seven core priority areas:

Housing
Stability

Transit And
Mobility Access

Food
Security

Mental Health
Advancement

Employment
Opportunities

System
Navigation

Equity Against
Structural
Oppression



These Community Collaborative Projects are a cornerstone of United Way Simcoe Muskoka's commitment to mobilize local action. By joining forces, we can dismantle root barriers and build a stronger, more inclusive region for everyone.

We look forward to reviewing your collaborative solutions and partnering with you to make a meaningful, systemic impact.



Timeline

Portal Opens

Tuesday, September 1, 2026

Portal Closes

Friday, October 30, 2026

Successful Applicants

A funding notification to successful applicants will be sent out in February 2027.



Support Calls:

Available from
September 1 - October 30

Information Sessions

This session provides participants with a comprehensive overview of the upcoming Community Collaborative Grant opportunity, equipping them with the knowledge needed to prepare strong and aligned applications. Key information will be shared, including application timelines, funding priorities, eligibility criteria, and available funding amounts. The session will also highlight important considerations for collaboration, partnership development, and proposal readiness.



- Tuesday, September 1, 2026
- Wednesday, September 16, 2026
- Thursday October 1, 2026

10AM-11AM
1PM-2PM
12AM-1PM



United Way Simcoe Muskoka Office Hours

Virtual office hours offer a weekly, one-hour drop-in space where organizations can join virtually, ask questions, and leave at their convenience.

September 9, 16, 23, 30
12PM - 1PM

October 7, 14, 21
12PM - 1PM

Application Review Process

During the evaluation process for funding requests, a group of volunteers referred to as the Community Investment & Engagement Standing Committee (CIESC) complete thorough and comprehensive review of all applications requesting funding from UWSM.

The process involves many hours of both independent and collective review of applications, as well as discussions and analysis of applications requesting support from UWSM. In the end, the thoughtful funding decisions ensure UWSM supports organizations that are accountable, transparent and both fiscally and socially responsible.

Even though an applicant might meet or exceed expectations on every criterion, UWSM is not always in the position to meet all recognized needs.

Once an organization is approved for and accepts funding from UWSM, it is subject to all UWSM policies and allocations procedures and must abide by the UWSM Supported Partner Agreement. At various points throughout the process, applicants may be asked to provide additional information regarding the program for which is being applied for funding.



Capacity Building Sessions

WILL BE HELD THROUGHOUT SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2026

Writing Strong Grant Proposals

This interactive session supports participants in moving beyond the basics of grant writing to develop more strategic, compelling proposals. Participants will deepen their understanding of why funders require specific elements, such as data, clearly defined outcomes, and measurable indicators and how these components strengthen credibility and demonstrate impact. Participants will also learn how to connect elements such as relevant data to frame the need, aligning outcomes with program goals and design measurements that show progress into a cohesive narrative that clearly communicates value.

Meaningful Collaboration

This is an opportunity to hear from a Collaborative Funded project. As they share their experience, attendees can explore how partnerships evolved from loose, ad hoc interactions (cooperate) to more structured alignment (coordinate), and ultimately to deeper, trust-based relationships (collaborate and integrate), moving beyond simply working alongside others to intentionally aligning roles, sharing decision-making, and leveraging each other's unique strengths.

Storytelling for Impact

This interactive session builds participants' skills in transforming data into compelling stories that clearly communicate impact. Participants will learn how to combine evidence (data, metrics, and results) with human-centered narratives to make their work more engaging, persuasive, and memorable. Through practical exercises, examples, and guided practice, the session explores key elements of effective storytelling, such as framing a clear message, structuring a narrative, and using data to support rather than overwhelm the story. By the end, participants will be equipped with tools and techniques to communicate their impact in a way that resonates with diverse audiences, including funders, partners, and communities.

Social Media Strategies

This session equips participants with practical strategies to strengthen their organization's presence and impact on social media. Moving beyond basic use, the session explores how non-profit's can create meaningful content, align messaging with organizational goals, and use storytelling, visuals, and data to increase reach and engagement, build community, and amplify their mission.

Funding Criteria

FUNDING REQUESTS WILL BE EVALUATED
USING THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA

1

The project provides service in Simcoe County, District Municipality of Muskoka, Town of The Blue Mountains (Ontario, Canada).

2

Projects lessen the effects and/or prevent poverty in our community.

3

Project prioritizes service to a specific group of people who are experiencing poverty or are at risk of experiencing a high incidence of poverty more than the general population. ie: equity-denied groups.

4

The project helps people break the cycle of generational poverty.

5

The project helps people move out of poverty and/or creates system changes that reduce or prevents poverty in our community.

6

Program addresses an urgent need facing our community.

7

Project is led by an eligible organization that is sustainable.



Eligible Organizations

**Registered
Charity**

**Qualified
Donee**

**Non
-Qualified
Donee**

Qualified Donee

A Qualified Donee can act as a sponsor organization for a nonprofit organization that does not have charitable status and is not a qualified donee as defined by Canada Revenue Agency. In this case, the sponsor organization would enter into the funding agreement with UWSM and assume financial and legal responsibility for the funded program, including reporting requirements and agency expectations. Funding would be issued to the sponsor organization.

Non-Qualified Donee

A Non Qualified Donee includes a broad range of non-charitable organizations, such as non-profits, grassroot organizations, Indigenous bands, collectives, and other groups.

For any group looking to pursue this option.

Please directly contact collaboratives@uwsimcoemusoka.ca

Additional Information

Organizations must also:

- have an active Board of Directors, or equivalent
- have annual financial statements
- fulfill UWSM socio-demographic data collection, reporting and evaluations requirements
- comply with all applicable federal, provincial and municipal laws and does not infringe upon any right under the Ontario Human Rights Code

Eligibility

Definition of Community Service Organizations

United Way Simcoe Muskoka will accept applications from Community Service Organizations, which means non-profit organizations, Indigenous Governing Bodies or Registered Charities located in Canada that provide services in Simcoe County, District Municipality of Muskoka, Town of The Blue Mountains (Ontario, Canada).

Community Service Organizations Include:



Registered Charities/ Other Qualified Donees

Charities and other qualified donees registered with the Canada Revenue Agency.



Non-Profit Organizations

Unincorporated and incorporated associations, clubs or societies that are not registered charities or individuals but are organized and operate exclusively for social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure, recreation or any other purpose except profit.



Indigenous Governing Bodies

Indigenous governing bodies that are not registered as qualified donees or non-profits, such as First Nations bands, Metis settlements and Inuit governments or associations.

As a charitable organization registered with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), United Way Simcoe Muskoka may only make grants to registered charities or other qualified donees under the Income Tax Act.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/list-charities/list-charities-other-qualified-donees.html>

Complex community challenges cannot be effectively addressed by one organization alone; meaningful collaboration across sectors strengthens program design, expands reach, and increases impact. By prioritizing locally rooted leadership within Simcoe County, The Town of Blue Mountains, and The District Municipality of Muskoka, proposals are better positioned to respond to the unique needs, assets, and priorities of the communities they serve.



Eligibility Continued

Projects are expected to have a **minimum of three (3)** multisectoral partners that can include Non-Qualified Donees in partnership with a registered charity.

Other eligible partners may include:

Registered Charity (*Charities and other qualified donees registered with the Canada Revenue Agency*)

Not-for-Profit Organizations (*Unincorporated and incorporated associations, clubs, or societies that are not registered charities or individuals but are organized and operate exclusively for social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure, recreation, or any other purpose except profit.*)

Indigenous Organizations (*Indigenous organizations may include, but are not limited to, incorporated for-profit and not-for-profit indigenous controlled organizations, Indigenous control unincorporated associations, Indian Act Bands, Tribal Councils and Indigenous self-government entities.*)

For Profit Organizations (*businesses*)

Municipalities

Public Health

Educational institutions

Eligible projects must serve communities across Simcoe County and the District Municipality of Muskoka including South Simcoe, Barrie and Area, South Georgian Bay, North Simcoe, Orillia and Area, and Muskoka.

Organizations funded through previous and existing Community Collaborative projects are eligible and must demonstrate how the project relates to current UWSM priorities.



Eligible Activities

FUNDING WILL BE FLEXIBLE TO MEET CURRENT NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS.



Eligible activities could include, but are not limited to:

- **Salaries & Benefits** (permanent and contract staff specific to operating the program/service)
- **General Program Expenses** (materials and supplies, printing, etc.)
- **Program/Service Occupancy Expenditures** (rent, utilities, insurance relating specifically to the location(s) required to operate the program/service)
- **Professional fees/Administration** (up to 15% of overall budget) (goods or services such as bookkeeping, janitorial services, IT, equipment maintenance services, security, insurance, audit costs and legal fees)
- **Travel Expenses:** Mileage incurred by project staff, volunteers and participants
- **Training and Community Events** (up to \$4000 annually)
- **Other Expenses** (honoraria, gift cards, items purchased for basic needs)
- **Capital:** Vehicles, furniture, computer hardware/software and other capital assets.

*Capital requests, such as costs associated with equipment, technology or renovations will be considered. This may mean any single item, or a collection of items which form one identifiable functional unit, that is not physically incorporated into another product or not consumed by the end of the project and has a purchase value of more than \$3,000 (before taxes).



Eligible Activities Continued

FUNDING WILL BE FLEXIBLE TO MEET CURRENT NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS.



Ineligible activities include but may not be limited to:

- Programs/services operating outside of Simcoe County, District Municipality of Muskoka and the Town of Blue Mountains
- Duplicate program(s)/service(s) in the same geographical area
- Programs/services not aligned to our impact areas
- Programs/services that could be deemed discriminatory, as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code
- Loans or grant programs
- Government mandated programs/services (*ie: services covered by OHIP, Child and Family Services Act, etc*)
- Religious activities
- Partisan political activity as defined by Canada Revenue Agency
- General operating funds for the purpose of organizational stability
- Interest expenses, debt retirement or mortgage payments
- Legal penalties
- Alcohol or drugs
- Gifts
- International Travel
- Fraudulent Activities



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Eligible Funding Request

Funding has been approved at \$600,000 per year to be shared amongst approved projects

Funding amounts may vary and are subject to funding availability, project scope and evaluation results. It is up to applicants to demonstrate the best use of funds based on their intended outcomes. In anticipation that funding requests are greater than the funding budget, we are asking applicants to reflect on taking only what is needed and ensuring resources are left for others.

Required Documents

All applicants (Lead Organization) must provide the following:

- Completed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each partner listed in the application
- Most recent annual financial audit statement or general ledger
- A signed Legal Signatures document
- Detailed Budget

If you are applying for capital, please include all applicable documents from the list below:

- Quotes (minimum of 3 if over \$3000)

If renovations:

- Property Manager, General Contractor name and contact details
- Approved zoning
- Building permit(s)
- Site Alteration
- Contracts (site plan, development, etc.)



Budget Template

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total Funding
Yearly Funding Allocation				\$ -
Item	Year 1 "Start-up"	Year 2	Year 3	Detailed Budget Notes
Salaries & Benefits (permanent and contract staff specific to operating the				
General Program Expenses (supplies, etc.)				
Program/Service Occupancy Expenditures (rent, utilities, insurance relating specifically to the location(s) required to operate				
Professional Fees Administration (up to 15% of overall budget); Goods or services such as bookkeeping, janitorial services, IT, equipment maintenance services, security,				
Travel Expenses: Mileage incurred by project staff, volunteers and participant travel				
Training & Community Events (up to \$4000 annually)				
Other Expenses (honoraria, gift cards, items purchased.				
Capital Expenses (computers, office furniture, equipment, renovations, vehicles)				
Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	

Reporting

Reporting is a critical project management function that supports accountability, informed decision-making, and the successful achievement of project objectives through regular monitoring and documentation of progress, expenditures, and outcomes.

Reporting Required Includes:

- 6-month interim project reporting
- Annual report incorporating United Way data framework and storytelling
- At least one site visit, annually
- Attend UWSM hosted events to speak about projects and their impact
- Opportunities to convene, participate in a learning day(s), and network with other organizations and communities. ie: Community of Practice

There may be additional reporting requirements for approved capital projects.



Application Tips



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Complete the eligibility quiz on the UWSM webpage:
<https://uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/collaboratives-2027-2030/>

[Click Here](https://uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/collaboratives-2027-2030/)

Connect with UWSM for your Support Call and continue to connect with UWSM with any questions. Please have the following information ready for your Support Call:

- o Scope of Project
- o Demographic and Geography served
- o Draft Budget
- o Partners

Attend the Community Collaborative Project Information Sessions and Capacity Building Sessions to gain a stronger understanding of the application process and funding priorities.

Prepare your responses in a Word document before starting the online application. This allows you to save your work, collaborate with others, and copy and paste your final responses into the application form with less stress.

Applications will only be considered complete when all required questions have been answered and all supporting documents have been submitted.

Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Please ensure all requirements are met before submitting.

Provide detailed budget notes for all requested funding. Include information such as staffing (full-time, part-time, contract), materials and supplies, mileage, equipment, and any other relevant expenses.

Write in your organization's authentic voice. While AI tools are increasingly common, applications are reviewed by people. Clear, genuine, and organization-specific responses are often the most effective.

Ensure your application leaves reviewers with a clear understanding of your project. Describe your goals, activities, partnerships, and intended community outcomes thoroughly so reviewers are not left with unanswered questions.

Demonstrate strong partnerships through letters of support. Letters should not only endorse the project concept but also confirm the partnership, clearly outlining each partner's role, responsibilities, and contributions. Strong community projects are built through collaboration rather than working in isolation.

When presenting data, explain its significance. Consider the question, "So what?" and clearly demonstrate what the data reveals about the community need, project opportunity, or anticipated impact. Focus on the story the data tells and why it matters to reviewers.

Application Process



United Way Simcoe Muskoka values accountability and transparency in all stages of grant making.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or concerns.

United Way Simcoe Muskoka welcomes the opportunity to unsuccessful applicants to provide feedback on their process.

Complete the eligibility quiz on the UWSM webpage:
<https://uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/collaboratives-2027-2030/>

[Click Here](https://uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/collaboratives-2027-2030/)

Book an initial support call to review the scope of the project

Review application, guidelines and continue to engage the UWSM team.

All applications will be submitted through Salesforce.

As part of our accessibility commitment, there are alternative ways to interview with us such as oral applications and French applications.

CIESC Members and UWSM staff will review all applications and make final funding decisions in January 2027. All applicants will be notified of approval or denial in February 2027 by email.

Projects will start April 1, 2027 and will end March 31, 2030.

A Supported Partner Agreement will be issued to successful applicants by UWSM and funding will flow following receipt of a signed agreement and electronic funds transfer (EFT) information.



For support and troubleshooting with Salesforce, please contact:
collaboratives@uwsimcoemuskoka.ca



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This document was created in August 2026 by United Way Simcoe Muskoka