



FREEDOM

TO RISE



United Way Suncoast's Commitment to Equity For Biennial Board Review: May 2023-May 2025

Organizational Equity Statement:

United Way Suncoast (UWS) has a long history of commitment to, and proudly values, serving every person in our community. As an organization committed to anti-racism, we vow to purposefully identify, discuss, and challenge all factors of inequity and the impact(s) they have on our organization, its systems, its people, and our community. We recognize that diversity and inclusion gains will not be sustained unless our community promotes and encourages new ways of problem-solving and diversity of thought. We advocate for diverse, equitable, and inclusive practices that unite our community, providing *all* the freedom to rise because United We Rise, United We Win.

Definitions

Equity: The intentional inclusion of everyone in society. Equity is achieved when systemic, institutional, and historical barriers based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other identities are dismantled and no longer predict socioeconomic, education and health outcomes.

Diversity: People are unique, and groups of individuals reflect multiple dimensions of difference including race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity and expression, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, familial status, residency status, socioeconomic status, mental health status, and/or geographical representation.

Inclusion: Creating cultures in which everyone's input is invited and equally considered by the whole (group, organization, society, etc.), elevating the voices of those impacted by decision making, recruiting diverse perspectives, and intentionally creating space in which people do their best work and are respected and honored for who they are.

Racism: Prejudice supported by social, institutional, and economic power. Racism manifests itself on several levels, including internally through bigotry and implicit bias, institutionally through outcome disparities, and culturally through historically racist policies and practices.

Community Commitments:

- United Way Suncoast stands against all forms of discrimination, racism, and injustice. We work to ensure that every person in our community has equitable opportunities to reach their full potential.
- We affirm explicitly and with united solidarity our identity as an anti-racism organization.
- United Way Suncoast believes that every person, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect.
- United Way Suncoast commits to community change by rallying non-profits, corporations, and government to work together to address, explore, and examine implicit bias and systemic advantage/oppression in order to remove barriers.
- United Way Suncoast will continue to research, develop, and implement strategies and best practices that dismantle racism and ethnic oppression within all aspects of our community and society including the removal of barriers to quality education and financial stability.



- United Way Suncoast values work derived from and delivered within our communities- establishing resource centers, programs, and opportunities in diverse neighborhoods to provide access to education, job opportunities, legal assistance, and resources to ensure that pathways exist for families to build a strong future for themselves and future generations.
- United Way Suncoast is devoted to learning and has a willingness to evolve and expand these commitments as we lead the journey for equitable Suncoast community change.

Team and Board Member Commitments

- All team and board members are expected to exhibit conduct that reflects inclusion.
- All team and board members are strongly encouraged and expected to have cultural competency training to enhance their knowledge of diverse perspectives and community.
- Any team or board member found to have exhibited any inappropriate conduct or behavior against others may be subject to disciplinary action or removed from United Way Suncoast service.

Leading with Equity

A brief reflection of how UWS has put forth its Commitment to Equity into the Suncoast:

- United Way Suncoast will invest a total of \$18MM in direct investments in strategic community partners in 2023-2025, supporting programs or interventions that promote basic needs, income/financial stability equity, education equity and social justice in targeted diverse and underrepresented communities.
- Because of our mission to serve ALICE families, UWS has identified (through programmatic work, census data and the United for ALICE report) specific focus areas within each county where we fund programs. To be eligible for funding, at least 75% of a program's total participants must reside in these focus areas.
- United Way Suncoast conducted an equity analysis and risk assessment of our community investment process, made recommendations for future community investment cycles and the organization as a whole, and made process and application improvements to be equitable among organization sizes and diverse leadership.
- Capacity-building initiatives launched in 2022 with a three-year community investment for 100 of our partner programs (reducing the need to dedicate resources to reapplying annually), and have continued by ensuring that all our partners, regardless of whether they've received a grant from us can access technical assistance opportunities for data collection and reporting, grant development, and networking with peers across the Suncoast Region. Organizations with low annual revenue and who serve or are led by individuals identifying as BIPOC, neurodiverse, or a member of the LGBTQ+ communities were invited to receive dedicated capacity building opportunities in the form of cohort workshops, coaching, tools to measure impact, validating and communicating program results, online data storage, grant research, downloadable resources, and/or web courses.
- Throughout its five-county Suncoast region, UWS's leadership hold positions or memberships in public, private, and community organizations that promote and advocate anti-racism and equity.



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- In 2021-2022, United Way Suncoast spent a total of \$1.9MM in support of our targeted place-based neighborhood centers, home to a large percentage of underrepresented and ALICE families in Sulphur Springs, Campbell Park, and North Greenwood.
- In 2019 and 2020, as a component of UWS's The Big Plan Initiative in Manatee County, UWS opened Reading Rooms at La Mirada Apartment complex and Bradenton Village that are home to a high percentage of ALICE families that are of Hispanic descent, many with limited proficiency in English with Spanish being their native language. UWS invests in early learning specialist team members to support these sites that are bilingual and biliterate.
- Early Learning Initiatives include culturally relevant components in programming, communications, and materials to expand the programs' reach to as many residents and children as possible.
- In partnership with the IRS, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) aims to support residents with disabilities including supporting a contracted American Sign Language interpreter and virtual appointments for residents who experience challenges with access to reliable transportation.
- Our website includes Spanish and Haitian Creole documents in its communications.
- UWS is a funding and research partner of the Tampa Bay Partnership's Annual Racial Equity report.
- UWS continues to invest in team member trainings and offers opportunities for board members and volunteers to develop a baseline understanding of equity within the workplace and within the context of UWS' Community Impact work.
- UWS mobilized several team members to engage in Courageous Conversations with the Foundation of Healthy St. Petersburg's Center for Health Equity.
- United Way Suncoast supports advocacy through public policy related issues surrounding these focus areas:
 - In 2022, UWS published a housing dashboard stressing the Suncoast's present and future housing needs, housing affordability, and the ongoing eviction crisis worsened by the pandemic and current inflation.
 - In 2022, UWS published an early learning dashboard to raise greater awareness, advocacy and action around supporting our childcare providers, families and youngest learners.
 - UWS's Public Policy Committee's Equity Statement: UWS' Public Policy Committee creates a space where all perspectives are considered, and all voices are heard. We are representative of the diversity in our community and embrace inclusion as a guiding value for our advocacy efforts.
- UWS implemented a Community Centered Approach, designed to dismantle harmful systems, and partner with community for transformational engagements.

Approved by the Suncoast Board of Directors: May 24, 2023