



Pathways to Potential Empowering Employment

Purpose Statement

Fall 2025

The United Way of Southwestern Indiana requests proposals for programs which support [ALICE](#) (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households and those living in poverty to attain or sustain living wage employment and/or reduce or eliminate barriers to employment.

Supporting Background

United Way of Southwestern Indiana (UWSWI) is dedicated to increasing economic upward mobility for residents of Spencer, Vanderburgh, and Warrick counties. We invest in best-in-class nonprofit programs; we provide direct services to low-income individuals and families; we facilitate dialogue across sectors; and we advocate for equitable public policy. All our efforts are driven by a desire to see our neighbors reach economic self-sufficiency and our community's children break cycles of generational poverty.

Poverty is a complex challenge influenced by numerous factors. To address the multidimensional nature of poverty, UWSWI prioritizes the following pathways towards upward mobility:

Empowering Employment

Mental Health

Thriving Next Gen

Social Stability & Growth

The current Request for Proposals (RFP) aligns with UWSWI's Empowering Employment Pathway.

Stable, living-wage employment is essential for helping those in poverty improve their economic circumstances. At a time when employers report having job opportunities

available, one may easily assume that it is simple for workers to find and keep the living-wage employment they need.

Unfortunately, the data shows that for multiple areas in our region, both urban and rural, people of prime working age (18-64) are struggling. In Vanderburgh County 13.7% of prime-working age individuals are living in poverty, compared to 11.8% statewide.

For Vanderburgh County alone 14.1% of families with children under eighteen live in poverty. The percentage for families with children under five living in poverty is 22.1%. The poverty rate for families with a female head of household (no adult male present) is 29.8% (Vanderburgh), 26.3% (Warrick) and 22.7% (Spencer), while the rate for all of Indiana is 14.6%. While statistics related to racial and ethnic groups are limited in some counties, non-white and Hispanic/Latino populations throughout our service area consistently experience poverty at higher rate than white/Caucasian residents. (*American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year Estimates*)

Anecdotally, we hear our neighbors' frustration over local infrastructure challenges and the barriers they create. Challenges related to childcare, transportation, and affordable housing are frequently cited as barriers which prevent workers from getting or keeping a good, stable job. Others have difficulty entering the workforce due to previous incarceration or other legal barriers. Sometimes even a seemingly small thing like an employer's requirement that new hires purchase specific clothing or equipment can sabotage a low-income person's chance of a better employment opportunity.

Grant Purpose

At United Way, we recognize that gaps in skills, training and other barriers can make getting or keeping a good job feel like an uphill battle. With the Empowering Employment Pathway Grant, we seek to invest in nonprofit programs which support lower income individuals and those living in poverty to attain or sustain living-wage employment, or which address barriers to such employment. We welcome proposals from community partners who are actively supporting our community's workers.

Grant Details

The Empowering Employment Pathway Grant application will open on September 29, 2025

- Proposal deadline: October 24, 2025
- Award announcement: December 2025
- Funding period: January 2026 – December 2027
- Minimum grant amount: \$50,000

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for this funding opportunity, applicants must offer programming in at least one of the following areas:

- Assist individuals in securing or maintaining living-wage employment.
- Provide opportunities to develop skills or credentials which support hiring into or advancement toward a living wage or higher paying position.
- Reduce barriers to employment by addressing community level challenges which hinder the attainment or maintenance of employment for low-income individuals and families (i.e., childcare, transportation, legal concerns, etc.).

Additional requirements include:

- Be either a 501(c) 3 organization as registered with the IRS or a community group with a 501(c)3 organization serving as its fiscal agent.
- Provide services to residents of Spencer, Vanderburgh, and/or Warrick counties.
Funds awarded by UWSWI are restricted for use in Spencer, Vanderburgh, and/or Warrick counties.
- Prioritize serving populations with incomes at or below the [ALICE Household Survival Budget](#). *Proposed programs must, at a minimum, serve a majority (50% or more) low-income clients.*
- Have strong organizational leadership supportive of community impact principles and the internal capacity to manage fiscal and performance expectations.

Grant Scope & Priority

The following priorities will guide the determination of grant awards.

- Non-profit organizations working to support ALICE households and those living in poverty to attain or sustain living-wage employment and reduce barriers to employment are encouraged to apply. We welcome proposals from a diverse range of service types, addressing various barriers.
- Successful applicants will demonstrate the ability to track and report aggregate data on program participants' employment status, household size, and income.

Priority will be given to programs which:

- Serve primarily low-income populations (75% or more of program participants).
- Reach populations at higher risk of living in poverty or who historically encounter greater barriers to financial self-sufficiency. The populations include people living with disabilities, members of racial/ethnic minority groups, women, veteran, and individuals with a criminal history.
- Include provisions for ongoing services after employment is attained to support job retention.

Scope limitations include:

- Programs whose primary focus is mental health or substance abuse services will not be considered for this grant opportunity. These programs are encouraged to apply for the Mental Health Pathway Grant in spring of 2026.
- Programs providing childcare must be licensed by the State of Indiana.

Key Dates

Monday, September 29th Grant cycle opens and applicant information session

Friday, October 24th Proposal submission deadline