United Way of Cass-Clay Notice of Funds Available

United Way of Cass-Clay (United Way) makes investments in measureable progress toward increasing access and reducing barriers for underserved, at-risk, and vulnerable individuals to achieve our Bold Community Goals:
- Reduce Hunger and Homelessness
- Prepare Children to Succeed
- Help People Be Independent

Ultimately, these goals will collectively help to *lift families out of poverty*.

United Way announces grant funding available for a three-year cycle (2023, 2024, and 2025) that focuses on investing to *prepare children to succeed*.

United Way is seeking to make measurable investments to ensure progress to:
- Prepare children for kindergarten socially, emotionally, and academically by:
  - Increasing availability of high-quality programs for low-income and underserved children.
  - Developing systems to identify children at risk of needing special education or additional supportive services through early interventions.
  - Supporting systems to deliver supplemental services for children and families needing additional support.
  - Supporting programs in efforts to implement family engagement activities.
  - Ensuring home environments support early development, families are able to identify barriers to childhood success, and families are connected with community-based resources.
- Prepare students to graduate choice ready to continue their education or enter the workforce by:
  - Working with schools and community-based organizations to identify and deliver timely supports to students at risk of not meeting key benchmarks such as third-grade reading levels, chronic absenteeism, or on track to graduate on time.
  - Supporting quality rating and improvement system for community-based out-of-school-time (OST) programs.
  - Supporting professional development for OST staff.
  - Connecting low-income and underserved students with apprenticeships, internships, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing, service learning, mentoring, and other community-based opportunities to further develop career aspirations and relevant experiences.
  - Engaging families of low-income and underserved students to identify barriers to student success, connect families with knowledge and resources to best support their student’s success, and connect families with community-based resources.
  - Supporting schools and community-based organizations in efforts to implement full-service community school models.
For both strategies to *Prepare Children to Succeed*, it is imperative to focus on providing services with a holistic, supportive approach through collaborations that enable better coordination of high-quality and well-timed services. These approaches should identify gaps in services or problems that are blocking equitable access to essential resources, supports, and services for children, students, and their families.

United Way will accept proposals that do not specifically target the populations included in the investment strategies listed in this notice, primarily low-income and historically underserved and marginalized students and families. All proposals must clearly define need and ability to measure impact and meet thresholds as defined in this notice.

Additionally, based on research provided below, priority will be given to proposals that adhere to the core principals of the two-generational (2Gen) approach, trauma-informed approach, and client-centered care.

By taking an equity approach to our investment strategy, we are looking to target children, students, and their families who have historically been underserved and historically seen achievement gaps in key educational metrics. These solutions are outlined in this framework as we move forward in redefining what it means for us to *prepare children to succeed*.

**RESEARCH/STRATEGY**

*Early Childhood Education*

Research continues to demonstrate the long-term benefits and return on investment (ROI) from providing high-quality early childhood education to low-income children. The benefits not only improve kindergarten readiness levels but improve third grade reading levels and high school graduation rates and dramatically increase the lifetime earning potential for students who benefit from quality early childhood experiences. Most notably, the research of Noble Prize winner and University of Chicago Economics Professor Dr. James Heckman consistently demonstrates the social and economic impact of investing early in a child’s and family’s life.\(^1\) Additionally, when targeted toward economically disadvantaged families, these early investments continually demonstrate a strong ROI, not only for the child and family but the larger community as well.

According to Bright & Early North Dakota (an initiative lead by the North Dakota Department of Human Services to ensure children receive high-quality child care and early education), high quality (when referring to programming) is important in child care and early education programs because in the first five years of life, a child's brain develops faster than any other time in their life. The experiences children have during this period in their development will have a lasting impact, and this makes high-quality early care and education so important. Research shows that children who have access to high-quality early care do better in school, make healthier choices, and are more likely to graduate and find employment.\(^2\)

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and the North Dakota Department of Human Services released the latest version of the Early Learning Standards Birth to Kindergarten in 2018. As part of announcing these standards, they recognized the dramatic
differences in quality among early childhood programs. They state: “... the quality of their early experiences can vary dramatically, and this can influence their learning and development. For example, by three years of age, some children have large vocabularies and others have much smaller ones. These differences usually reflect the everyday language experiences that children have with adults as well as other experiential and developmental factors. Such differences can have a lasting impact on later school success. Early childhood programs must create stimulating learning environments and implement intentional teaching strategies that ensure all children are ready to succeed in school.”

These standards include the following guiding principles that prepare young children for success:

- Families are children's first and most important caregivers, teachers, and advocates. Families are valued and supported as the primary influence in their child's early learning and education. Their knowledge, skills, and cultural backgrounds contribute to children's school readiness.

- Each child is unique and can succeed. Children are individuals with different rates and paths of development. Each child is uniquely influenced by their prenatal environment, temperament, physiology, and life experiences. With the appropriate support, all children can be successful learners and achieve the skills, behaviors, and knowledge described in the Standards.

- Learning occurs within the context of relationships. Caring families, teachers, and other adults matter in a young child's life. Responsive and supportive interactions with adults are essential to children's learning.

- Children learn best when they are emotionally and physically safe and secure. Nurturing, responsive, and consistent care helps create safe environments where children feel secure and valued. In these settings, children are able to engage fully in learning experiences.

- Areas of development are integrated, and children learn many concepts and skills at the same time. Any single skill, behavior, or ability may involve multiple areas of development. For example, as infants gain fine motor skills, they can manipulate objects in new ways and deepen their understanding of cause and effect. As preschoolers gain new verbal skills, they can better manage their emotions and form more complex friendships.

- Teaching is intentional and focused on how children learn and grow. Children are active, engaged, and eager learners. Good teaching practices build on these intrinsic strengths by providing developmentally appropriate instruction and opportunities for exploration and meaningful play.

- Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family's culture, background, language, and beliefs. Responsive and respectful learning environments welcome children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Effective teaching practices and learning experiences build on the unique backgrounds and prior experiences of each child.

Child care is a necessity for many working families in our community. In both Cass and Clay counties, over 80% of families with children ages 0-5 have both parents engaged in the workforce. This statistic highlights the importance of having consistent, quality care for young children so both parents can earn income. It also gives credence to the notion that child care
serves a dual purpose: providing early learning activities so children are prepared for kindergarten and ensuring parents can participate in the workforce to earn wages that allow them to be more income stable. Child care is also incredibly costly to working families. The median income in Cass and Clay counties is around $65,000, and the average annual price of care for one child (0-17 months) is $10,652. This equates to 16% of a family’s annual income. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), child care is considered affordable if it costs families no more than 7% of their income. Across nearly every category — whether it be marital status, race, age, education level, or income — families paying for child care spend, on average, a greater share of their income than the HHS benchmark of affordability. In fact, on average, working families paying for child care spend about 40% more than what is considered affordable.

While low-income families do qualify for child care assistance, the income qualifications phase out families who are between 165-199% of poverty. While not universal, it is often noted that families choose not to take higher paying jobs as they will lose assistance, thus moving backward on the economic ladder, or they choose care they can afford, which is lower quality, and therefore puts their children at greater risk for not being prepared for kindergarten.

United Way has endeavored for the past decade to make quality child care more affordable for working families. This has been accomplished by providing additional scholarships to parents that qualify for child care assistance through county social services. While impactful for families receiving the additional scholarships, we have learned that the cost is prohibitively expensive to accomplish systemic change. We fully anticipate to continue to partner with child care centers in this upcoming investment cycle, although we need to consider alternative methods to leveraging United Way funding versus providing individual scholarships to families.

School-aged Support
United Way believes all students should have the opportunity to succeed and be supported from birth through graduation and beyond, although research shows this is not the reality for many of our low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students. According to the Education Commission of the States, educational equity means that all students receive equal access to the same educational pathways. This goal takes providing students with the unique supports they need to succeed and takes into consideration the varying personal experiences and social identifiers that impact each student’s educational opportunities.

As more data from students becomes available through state departments and local districts, there is a growing body of research showing that mobility, i.e., students moving in and out of districts, can and does play a role in student academic success. The most common causes of student mobility are residential moves related to parents’ jobs or other financial instability. A 2010 Government Accountability Office study followed students who entered kindergarten in 1998 through 2007. It found 13% of students changed schools four or more times by the end of eighth grade, and highly mobile students were disproportionately more likely to be poor or Black than students who changed schools two or fewer times. The same study found families who did not own their own homes made up 39% of the most highly mobile students.
Mobility can be particularly hard on students in the early grades, as they learn foundational skills. A 2015 New York University study found that out of 381 low-income, predominantly ethnic-minority students in Chicago, 327 changed schools at least once from kindergarten through 4th grade, and 40 students transferred three or more times. The more often students moved, the lower they scored on both the state standardized math test and on teacher observations of the students’ critical thinking. Locally, across the three metro school districts (Fargo Public Schools, West Fargo Public Schools, and Moorhead Area Public Schools), student mobility is an issue and does correlate to student academic success, especially when looking at sub-populations. Across the three metro districts, students who qualified for the free and/or reduced lunch program had the highest mobility rate, meaning they either transferred into or out of a district. Of those that transferred in/out, 66% of students are eligible to receive free/reduced lunch. Additionally, while the student population of the metro districts is about 71% white, only 50% of those that transferred in/out of the district are white. This gives credence that students and their families must be supported outside of school, particularly parents. These supports should help the family maintain stability and employment so if and/or when moves occur, they are planned and the moves reflect upward mobility.

**Out-of-School-Time Experiences**

Outside of school, students can gain valuable skills and access to opportunities through afterschool programs (also known as Out-of-School-Time Programs). Although, research conducted by the Afterschool Alliance shows children from low-income families have more limited opportunities outside of school compared to their higher income peers. As part of their America After 3PM report, they show 89% of parents in the highest income bracket reported their child participates in at least one out-of-school-time experience. This compares to only 6 in 10 parents in the lowest income bracket. This report points to a number of barriers low-income families face in accessing afterschool programs and experiences. Low-income parents were most likely to identify the following as barriers compared to higher income parents: 11

- Cost
- Lack of a safe way for their child(ren) to get to and from the program
- Not having a program available in their area

Additionally, the American After 3PM report shows a number of additional barriers parents of color face in accessing afterschool programs for their children, even when comparing low-income parents of color to low-income white parents. Overall, Black and Hispanic parents are more likely to report the following barriers compared to white parents: 11

- Lack of a safe way for their child(ren) to get to and from the program
- Hours of operation
- Location presents challenges
- There were not space available in the program they prefer

In North Dakota, 17,541 children participate in afterschool programs, according to the Afterschool Alliance, yet they found that 26,937 children are left alone and unsupervised after school, meaning for every child in a program, there are two waiting and wanting to get in. North Dakota parents report they did not enroll their child in an afterschool program because of the following: 12

- 42%: lack of available programs
• 47%: programs are too expensive
• 43%: no safe way for their child to get to and from programs

One particular type of out-of-school-time experience is work-based learning or career exploration experiences. A report published by the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program highlights three key concepts to support a renewed, equitable vision of work based learning: 13

• Positive relationships with adults that support growth and development
• Social capital that provides information and contacts regarding employment
• Work experiences that offer opportunities for hands-on learning and expose young people to new environments and expectations

Similar to our research gathered to inform our strategy to achieve our Bold Goal of Helping People be Independent, there is a strong connection to workforce skills and social capital in ensuring long-lasting change and stability for students and their families. As the Brookings report illustrates, even before COVID-19 disrupted our economy and workforce, the labor market was not working for many young adults, particularly those without college degrees who were disproportionately working low-income jobs or out of work. Their recommendation is to “build a labor market that provides ample opportunities for everyone who needs to support themselves and their families — not only for a relatively narrow band of the population, disproportionately comprised of affluent white people with bachelor’s degrees.” 13

According to the Search Institute research, social capital can be defined as “the resources that arise from a web of relationships which people can access and mobilize to help them improve their lives and achieve their goals, which inevitably shift over time.” 14 For youth and students, this is a benefit of positive relationships that can connect them to valuable resources and opportunities. Search Institute uses the term Developmental Relationships for these types of positive relationships that are critical in helping students succeed. According to their research, these relationships on average are “so-so” and aspects of these relationship are less common for historically marginalized youth and young adults and even less common for low-income youth and young adults. 14

Community Schools
Finally, as United Way continues to research opportunities to Prepare Children to Succeed, there is as growing movement to support community schools. Across the nation and both North Dakota and Minnesota, the concept of full-service community schools is receiving more attention and is being implemented in both urban and rural settings. The community school model is an evidence-based school improvement strategy designed to help schools support students and their families so that they can fully engage in high-quality learning opportunities. According to the Partnership for the Future of Learning’s Community Schools Playbook, “Community schools are centers of flourishing communities where everyone belongs, works together, and thrives. They become hubs of their neighborhoods and communities, uniting families, educators, and community partners.” The community school model helps schools to actively build strong webs of supports around the following four pillars: 15

1. Integrated Student Supports – By coordinating critical supports at the school site, community schools ensure the needs of students and families are met with minimal
disruption to the school day by coordinating critical supports at the school site. This, in turn, enables teachers to focus on instruction, knowing that there are other professionals attending to the nonacademic needs of their students. Primary health and dental care, mental health counseling services, juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation, housing and homelessness prevention, child care services, family education, and career counseling are common examples of integrated student supports.

2. **Enriched Learning Opportunities** – Local and cultural experts collaborate with community schools to provide enriched learning experiences both in classrooms during the school day and through added learning time before and after school, on weekends, and during summer vacation both at school and in the community. Such opportunities include community-based and culturally relevant lessons and activities that address real-world experiences and issues. These lessons provide students with engaging opportunities for personal and community development.

3. **Active Family, Student, and Community Engagement** – Community schools build trust and partnership by actively attending to relationships with families, students, and community leaders. These authentic relationships lead to active family engagement, which is essential to helping families be more involved in the decisions about their children’s education. Through active family engagement, the school can better understand and respond to persistent barriers and identify family and community assets. Students do better academically and socially when their parents and educators are working in partnership.

4. **School Leadership Driven by Continuous Improvement** – A shared commitment to collaborative leadership and practices creates opportunities for deeper, more trusting relationships between families and school staff and between teachers and administrators. These relationships strengthen the school’s ability to work with family and community members to create meaningful learning opportunities for students by bringing the local knowledge of the community into the school. These relationships also can help make sure that the supports and services address local needs. Deeper collaboration supports improved implementation of the entire strategy.

United Way is intentionally examining how our Bold Goals are interconnected and work together to truly lift families out of poverty. This intentional intersectionality of our strategies will lead us to making more focused investments that create lasting social change, helping all families to reach their full potential in our community through targeted, tailored interventions and services to meet each family’s unique needs and strengthens. This often starts with education, although as evident in the research included, **we must take into account the child and family’s access to food, housing, social capital, and social support when helping prepare them to succeed.**
EVALUATION/SELECTION PROCESS

United Way utilizes a multi-tiered, volunteer-led vetting process that relies on volunteer community investors to make funding recommendations and decisions at each appropriate level.

United Way requires all interested applicants to submit an email with intent to apply to Megan Jenson, Senior Community Impact Manager, at mjenson@unitedwaycassclay.org. In your email, please include your program name and the name and email addresses of those who will need access to complete the application.

Starting Monday, August 30, following receipt of your agency’s email with intent to apply, a link to the electronic Letter of Intent (LOI) will be made available to the primary contact person(s) listed within two business days. All LOIs will be due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, October 29, 2021. The online platform will automatically lock down, and LOIs will not be accepted following this deadline.

All submitted LOIs will be reviewed by the volunteer Community Investment Committee (CIC). Each LOI is vetted utilizing an evaluation rubric to guide the reviews in ensuring that applicants meet the eligibility criteria for funding and have a demonstrated capacity to execute on the goals and strategies set forth by the Board of Trustees. Along with reviewing each submitted LOI, the CIC will conduct visits with each organization. Visits may be virtual or in person, and location will be determined based on preference and schedule of applicants and CIC volunteers. The evaluation rubric will be available once finalized prior to the due date of the LOI.

The CIC will invite select applicants to submit a full Request for Proposal (RFP) based on eligibility criteria, alignment with United Way’s goals and strategies, and their demonstrated ability to measure performance indicators.

NOTE: Not all applicants that submit an LOI will be invited to submit a full RFP.

By Wednesday, December 15, selected applicants will be notified of acceptance and receive a link to the electronic RFP. All RFPs will be due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 4, 2022. The online platform will automatically lock down, and RFPs will not be accepted following this deadline.

Once applicants have submitted the RFP, United Way will organize volunteers to conduct a panel review where volunteers review proposals, visit with each applicant, and gain further information and perspective on the specific programming. These volunteers will make an initial funding recommendation based on their review of the proposals utilizing an evaluation rubric to guide scoring of RFPs and the conducted site visits. This rubric will assist in determining which proposals most closely align with United Way’s goals and strategies and to determine the frequency, intensity, and intentionality of the services provided by the applicant(s) on the clients served through the RFP.
Following the panel reviews of all submitted RFPs, the CIC will convene to review all individual panel recommendations and make a final funding recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The process concludes with the Board of Trustees, which makes final funding decisions.

For a complete timeline, please see Investment Timeline on page 18.

Our evaluation process is subject to change. Any changes will be communicated with applicants as decided, including but not limited to, conducting site visits virtually using an online platform or changes to timing in our timeline.

ELIGIBILITY
All applicants must meet and provide evidence of the following requirements:

- Funding from this proposal will be used to serve residents of Cass County, North Dakota, and/or Clay County, Minnesota. Applicants who serve a larger geographic area (i.e. statewide) may apply but must ensure that funding will support activities in these two counties.
- Maintain eligibility as a public agency, including Indian tribes and nonprofit private organizations, both secular and faith-based, which serve individuals in Cass County, North Dakota, and/or Clay County, Minnesota. This requires that private nonprofit organizations obtain and maintain a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service.
- Be incorporated or chartered under appropriate local, state, or federal statutes.
- Abide by federal and state laws regarding anti-discrimination, equal opportunity, affirmative action, and anti-terrorism.
- Have an active, locally based, volunteer board of directors that meets regularly, makes policy decisions, and holds election of officers.
- Have an administrative structure with defined lines of responsibility, a mission statement, and bylaws.
- Be financially stable and able to ensure appropriate stewardship of the funds entrusted, perform a regular budgeting process, and be able to submit IRS Form 990 and/or audited financial statements.
- Be willing to cooperate with collaborative partners and other organizations to meet collective goals and create measurable, lasting change for individuals in our community.
- Have current license, certification, and permits if applicable.
- Be able to demonstrate effectiveness of programs and services through measurable outcomes.

Per our guidelines, United Way does not fund the following agencies or activities:

- Fraternal organizations, merchant associations, chamber memberships or programs, or 501(c)(4) or (6) organizations
- Section 509(a)(3) – Type III supporting organizations
- Private foundations
- Endowments or memorial campaigns
- Capital campaigns
- Fundraising events or sponsorships

Specific definitions, terms, and references can be found in Appendix A.
• Programs operated by religious organizations for religious purposes
• Political organizations or organizations designed primarily to lobby
• Individuals, including those seeking scholarships or fellowship assistance
• Travel and related expenses including student trips and tours
• Deficit reduction
• Sporting events, organizations, or teams

PROPOSAL THRESHOLD
Proposals must meet the following threshold to be considered to move forward in this grant review cycle:
• Able to clearly identify population that will be targeted through the proposal
• Willing to collaborate with other Community Partners to ensure appropriate coverage of our service area and no duplication of services
• Community-based early childhood education programs must participate in Bright & Early, Parent Aware, and/or hold NAEYC accreditation
• Community-based programs operating within the school must have a letter of support from the district and/or receive match supporting from the school district
• Preference given to the school districts as applicant in partnership with a nonprofit entity; investments will be provided to the school district
• Out-of-school-time or afterschool programs must participate in the ND Afterschool Network or MN Ignite Afterschool quality initiatives (including actively implementing quality practices and engaging in quality improvement plans)

Additionally, priority will be given to proposals who, if appropriate, adhere to the:
• Core principles of the 2Gen Approach
• Core principles of trauma-informed care approach
• Core principles of client-centered care care

United Way may request additional information to verify proposal thresholds are being met; although, we encourage each proposal to provide detailed information as part of the LOI to illustrate how the proposal meets these requirements.

TARGET POPULATIONS
Poverty
As of 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 5-year estimates, in Cass and Clay counties, 11.1% of the population lives below the poverty level. This is almost 26,000 individuals in our community. In 2020, the poverty guideline was set for a family of four as living on less than $26,200 a year. Moreover, 13.5% of children under the age of 5 live in poverty, and 18.1% of 18- to 34-year-olds live in poverty. This illustrates that young families struggle the most in our community.
**Educational Attainment**

We know one of the biggest predictors of poverty is the lack of educational attainment. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, of all Cass and Clay County residents over 25 years of age: 18

- 5.3% (8,001 individuals) have less than a high school diploma
- 21.0% (31,904) have graduated high school or have high school diploma equivalency
- 35.3% (53,472) have some college or associate’s degree
- 38.4% (58,293) have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher

If we look at these educational attainment levels by race and ethnicity, there are clear disparities in opportunity: 18

Poverty rates are higher for those with lower educational attainment: 19

- 23.9% of those age 25 and older with less than a high school diploma live in poverty.
- 12.6% of those age 25 and older who are high school graduates or equivalency live in poverty.
- 7.4% of those age 25 and older with some college or an associate’s degree live in poverty.
- 2.3% of those age 25 and older with a bachelor’s degree or higher live in poverty.

It is also worth noting that there is a higher percentage of women age 25 and older in poverty who have a lower educational attainment level: 19
Specific definitions, terms, and references can be found in Appendix A.

This correlates with median earnings by educational attainment and sex: 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school graduate</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or associate’s degree</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree or higher</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enrollment Estimates
In addition to the disparities in educational attainment, we also need to consider education enrollment estimates. Current 5-year enrollment estimates show that of all Cass and Clay County residents over the age of 3: 20

- 29.9% are enrolled in some level of school.
  - 9.2% (6,411 children) are enrolled in nursery school, preschool, or kindergarten.
  - 34.8% (24,174 students) are enrolled in grade 1 to grade 8.
  - 15.6% (10,824 students) are enrolled in grade 9 to grade 12.
  - 40.4% (28,040 students) are enrolled in college or graduate school.
- 70.1% are not enrolled in any level of school.
These are the enrollment estimates for the total population in Cass and Clay counties by age:

- 37.4% of all 3- to 4-year-olds are enrolled in school.
- 93.5% of all 5- to 9-year-olds are enrolled in school.
- 98.3% of all 10- to 14-year-olds are enrolled in school.
- 98.9% of all 15- to 17-year-olds are enrolled in school.
- 88.3% of all 18- and 19-year-olds are enrolled in school.
- 53.0% of all 20- to 24-year-olds are enrolled in school.
- 12.5% of all 25- to 34-year-olds are enrolled in school.
- 2.6% of all individuals 35 years and over are enrolled in school.

This data is concerning in the low number of children ages 3 and 4 enrolled in pre-kindergarten or early childhood education. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a nursery school is defined as a group or class that is organized to provide educational experiences for children during the year or years preceding kindergarten. This includes child care with instruction that includes but is not limited to programs such as Head Start or is sponsored by local agencies to provide preschool education. Children being cared for in private homes would not be counted in nursery school.  

Additionally, 17.3% of all students (3 years and over enrolled in school) are below the poverty level:

- 9.5% of all children enrolled in nursery school or preschool live in poverty.
- 9.6% of all kindergarteners live in poverty.
- 12.4% of all students grades 1 to 4 live in poverty.
- 7.6% of all students grades 5 to 8 live in poverty.
- 9.5% of all students grades 9 to 12 live in poverty.
- 28.9% of all college up to undergraduate level live in poverty.
- 23.6% of all graduate or professional students live in poverty.

In total, this means 9.9% of our students in kindergarten to grade 12 live below the poverty level. To calculate low-income (up to 200% of the poverty guidelines) we look at those students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunches. Based on most recently available data, for Cass and Clay counties combined, 30.1% of all students qualify for the free and/or reduced lunch program.

Below is the racial and ethnic makeup of students enrolled in school throughout Cass and Clay counties by grade level. These percentages are based on 5-year estimates, which allows us to look at disparities in enrollment. With over 90% of the population enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, the demographic makeup of these students reflects our overall population. Also, data shows us that younger generations are more racially and ethnically diverse. With the data outlined below, there are some concerns with higher rates of total enrollment, enrollment in preschool or early childhood education, and enrollment in college or graduate school by white students compared to the percentage enrolled in grades 1 through 12. Based on this data, we would anticipate to see under 76% of children enrolled in preschool or early childhood education identify as white alone, compared to the 82% shown. Additionally, we would anticipate the college enrollment to look closer to enrollment of grades 9 to 12.
Enrollment data includes students enrolled in both public and private schools in our two-county service area.

**Third-Grade Reading, Chronic Absenteeism, Mobility Rates, and On-Time Graduation**

Four commonly used indicators of student success are 3rd Grade Reading, Chronic Absenteeism, Mobility Rates, and On-Time Graduation. The chart below shows a strong correlation between being able to read on time at third grade, missing more than 10% of school days, transferring in or out of a district during the school year, and graduating in four years of high school. This data represents students enrolled in our three largest metro districts (Fargo Public Schools, West Fargo Public Schools, and Moorhead Area Public Schools), as the student population is large enough to be able to break down these indicators by a student’s race, ethnicity, and household income. ²⁶,²⁷,²⁸

![Graph showing correlations between indicators of student success.](image_url)
Specific definitions, terms, and references can be found in Appendix A.

NOTE: No data is available for Native American students on third-grade reading proficiency.

Through all of this local data, it is very clear to see that our low-income and BIPOC students are experiencing disproportionately lower educational outcomes across all indicators of student success.

*With this strong evidence and research, United Way will target investments to Prepare Children to Succeed on children, students, and families who are low-income, have historically been underserved and have historically seen achievement gaps in key educational metrics as indicated above.*

**PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

The goal of *preparing children to succeed* is specifically to:

- Prepare children for kindergarten socially, emotionally, and academically, focused on targeted populations
- Prepare students to graduate choice ready to continue their education or enter the workforce, focused on targeted populations

In order to demonstrate progress toward these goals, all applicants funded through this process will provide data on program outcomes in three ways: demographic information, shared performance measures, and program-specific measures. All reporting will be entered into the secure online application on a semi-annual basis.

Applicants must be able to reasonably and accurately describe how the population they seek to impact through services is in line with our target population listed above. Using local data and statistics to support data collection methods and program services from non-partisan
sources is advised and preferred. Definitions for key terms and references are provided in Appendix A on page 19-22. Examples of sources for data collection, local statistics, and key populations can be found in Appendix B, found on page 23.

1) **Demographic information:** Throughout United Way’s history, we have provided funding to create opportunities for everyone in our service area, including economically disadvantaged or low-income individuals, to access programs and services that can create lasting change to improve lives. Generally, low-income is considered an income at or below 200% of the set poverty guideline; refer to Appendix C on page 24 for more details.

While we will continue to fund programs that serve individuals from all economic backgrounds, we will focus a heavier percentage of resources on those who are low-income and underserved. Demographic information on clients served will be a critical step in allowing United Way and its partners to target interventions to the right areas.

All applicants will be asked to provide the total number of unduplicated clients served in each of the following categories:
   a) Client Age
   b) Client Gender Identity
   c) Client Poverty Level Breakdown (for exact dollar figures, see chart in Appendix C)
   d) Client Race/Ethnicity
   e) Client Residence

2) **Shared performance measures:** All applicants must agree to participate in the shared performance measures effort. We feel the indicators included under each strategy below are predictive of student and family success in achieving the overall goals laid out in this notice.

The indicators listed below are a potential pool of shared performance measures that will be collected as part of this shared performance measures effort on an annual basis through the duration of the three-year grant cycle. Programs will be asked to select one of the two strategies and will need to demonstrate how the program can measure the indicators within that strategy.

a) Prepare children for kindergarten socially, emotionally, and academically, focused on targeted populations (STRATEGY 1)

   **Long-term Outcomes**
   - #/% of children entering kindergarten socially, emotionally, and academically ready

   **Interim Outcomes**
   - #/% of children meeting developmentally appropriate milestones
   - #/% of children who identify as at-risk through early intervention screening
   - #/% of families gaining knowledge of early childhood development and parenting strategies
   - #/% of families accessing and connecting to additional services
Outputs
- #/\% of children enrolled in accredited/high quality early education programs
- #/\% of families receiving information or resources to support childhood success
- #/\% of families receiving resources to support early learning and development at home

b) Prepare students to graduate choice ready to continue their education or enter the workforce, focused on targeted populations (STRATEGY 2)

Long-term Outcomes
- #/\% of students who graduate ready for postsecondary education or workforce

Interim Outcomes
- #/\% of service providers improving quality or maintaining high quality
- #/\% of students decrease absenteeism or maintain attendance of at least 90\% of school days
- #/\% of students who maintain or improve literacy skills
- #/\% of students who maintain or improve 21st century skills (including STEM)
- #/\% of students connected to a positive mentor or increase social capital
- #/\% of families accessing and connecting to additional services
- #/\% of families demonstrating knowledge of how to support student success

Outputs
- #/\% of students engaged in 21st century learning
- #/\% students participating in afterschool, weekend, and summer programs that support their academic success and development
- #/\% of students receiving support services (e.g. mentoring, tutoring, mental health counseling)
- #/\% of students connected to internships and/or service learning opportunities
- #/\% of families receiving information or resources to support student success (e.g. attendance, homework completion, supporting students at home)

3) **Program-specific performance measures**: Applicants may choose to provide additional program outcome information specific to their services. United Way staff recommends no more than two additional outcome measures.
**INVESTMENT TIMELINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 29, 2021</td>
<td>Electronic LOI due to United Way for consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 8-24, 2021</td>
<td>Initial visits conducted by CIC with organizations that have applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 15, 2021</td>
<td>Organizations will be notified of acceptance to submit RFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 4, 2022</td>
<td>Electronic RFP due to United Way for consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1-25, 2022</td>
<td>Visits conducted by volunteers for organizations that have applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2022</td>
<td>Notification to applicants of Board of Trustees funding decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1, 2023</td>
<td>Funding begins for three-year grant cycle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OPEN OFFICE HOURS – INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS**

United Way will hold open office hours to offer community members and agencies an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about this new effort on an individual or collaborative basis. These meetings will be held throughout August, September, and October at United Way, located at 4351 23rd Ave S, Fargo, or online via Zoom. To schedule a time to meet with United Way to discuss your potential proposal as an individual agency or as a collaborative, click this link and select a time slot that works best for you:

https://calendly.com/mjenson/united-way-prepare-children-to-succeed

**LOI TRAINING SESSIONS**

United Way will hold two live training sessions on how to complete the online LOI to be considered for this upcoming grant cycle. This is a great opportunity to have any questions answered prior to submitting your LOI for consideration. These sessions will be held online via Zoom. Session recordings will be available after live training for partners who are unable to attend a live session.

Please email Megan Jenson at mjenson@unitedwaycassclay.org to RSVP for one of these training sessions.

- Tuesday, September 21 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, September 29 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For any questions, please contact

- Thomas Hill at thill@unitedwaycassclay.org or call 701-532-4604
- Megan Jenson at mjenson@unitedwaycassclay.org or call 701-532-4608
- Ahmed Shiil at ashiil@unitedwaycassclay.org or call 701-532-4609
APPENDIX A

The following are how we define key terms included in our investment strategy:

2Gen (Two-Generation) Approach builds family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives together. The approach recognizes that families come in all different shapes and sizes and that families should define themselves.
Reference: The Aspen Institute

Afterschool or Out-of-School Time programs take place before school, after school, summers, weekends, and during school breaks. Programs provide PreK-12 students with regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities in a structured, supervised environment. These programs can be located in schools, school-age childcare centers, community-based organizations, universities, libraries, museums, camps, and many other locations in a community.
Reference: ND Afterschool Network

At-Risk is often used to describe students or groups of students who are considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school. The term may be applied to students who face circumstances that could jeopardize their ability to complete school, such as homelessness, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, serious health issues, domestic violence, transiency (as in the case of migrant-worker families), or other conditions, or it may refer to learning disabilities, low test scores, disciplinary problems, grade retentions, or other learning-related factors that could adversely affect the educational performance and attainment of some students.
Reference: EdGlossary.org

BIPOC is an acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Black can refer to dark-skinned peoples of Africa, Oceania, and Australia or their descendants without regard for the lightness or darkness of skin tone and who were enslaved by white people. Indigenous, here, refers to ethnic groups native to the Americas and who were killed en masse by white people. People of color is an umbrella term for non-white people, especially as they face racism and discrimination in a white dominant culture.
Reference: Dictionary.com

Client-Centered Care (also known as person-centered care or patient-centered care) is focusing on the needs of the person rather than the needs of the service. Providing care or service that is respectful and responsive to individual preferences, needs and values, and ensuring that individual values guide all decision on care and services.
Reference: Health Leads

Community School model is an evidence-based school improvement strategy designed to help schools support students and their families so that they can fully engage in high-quality learning opportunities. Community schools are centers of flourishing communities where
everyone belongs, works together, and thrives. They become hubs of their neighborhoods and communities, uniting families, educators, and community partners.

Resource: MN Department of Education

**Equity** is defined as “the state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial and fair.” The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. To achieve and sustain equity, it needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept. Systemic equity is a complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice. It is a dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits and outcomes.

Reference: Annie E Casey Foundation

**Evidence-Based** programs have undergone rigorous testing and demonstrated their effectiveness. These programs, having established a strong level of evidence, are often “packaged” and made available for replication. Evidence-based programs typically require specialized training and the use of specific supervision and practice guidelines, materials, monitoring and data reporting.

Resource: The Annie E Casey Foundation

**Historically Underserved and Marginalized Families** can include many communities — people of color, low-income, new Americans, women, and so on. For the purpose of this proposal, we are asking programs to define how their target populations are considered historically underserved and marginalized.

**Low-income (or economically disadvantaged)** is generally considered to include household income at or below 200% of the set poverty guideline; refer to Appendix C on page 24 for more details.

**Supportive Services** are inclusive of all additional services that will help individuals become self-sustaining or have the ability to be lead a stable life, specifically when it comes to gaining and maintaining livable-wage employment and safe, stable housing.

**Social Capital** revolves around three dimensions: interconnected networks of relationships between individuals and groups (social ties or social participation), levels of trust that characterize these ties, and resources or benefits that are both gained and transferred by virtue of social ties and social participation.

Reference: Encyclopedia Britannica

**Trauma-Informed Approach** includes programs, organizations, or systems that realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.

Reference: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Specific definitions, terms, and references can be found in Appendix A.

The following resources were used to formulate our investment strategy:

2. Bright & Early North Dakota, Frequently Asked Questions: [https://www.brightnd.org/faq](https://www.brightnd.org/faq)
6. Child Care Aware of North Dakota, Child Care Profile 2020: [https://ndchildcare.org/file_download/2621898f-02f4-4e61-a6ce-9ece64b62c6a](https://ndchildcare.org/file_download/2621898f-02f4-4e61-a6ce-9ece64b62c6a)
10. Education Week, Student Mobility: How It Affects Learning, August 2016: [https://www.edweek.org/leadership/student-mobility-how-it-affects-learning/2016/08](https://www.edweek.org/leadership/student-mobility-how-it-affects-learning/2016/08)
18. United States Census Bureau, Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Older (by Race and Ethnicity), 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables:
19. United States Census Bureau, Educational Attainment, 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables:
20. United States Census Bureau, School Enrollment, 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Table:
21. United States Census Bureau, Subject Definitions: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/subject-definitions.html#nurseryschool
22. United States Census Bureau, Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by School Enrollment by Level of School for Populations 3 Years and Older, 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables:
25. United States Census Bureau, School Enrollment by Detailed Level of School for the Population 3 Years and Older (by Race and Ethnicity), 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables:
26. Insights.ND.Gov, Fargo Public School District Data:
    https://insights.nd.gov/Education/District/Enrollment/09001
27. Insights.ND.Gov, West Fargo Public School District Data:
    https://insights.nd.gov/Education/District/Enrollment/09006
28. Minnesota Report Card, Moorhead Public School District Data:
    https://rc.education.mn.gov/#demographics/orgId--10152000000_groupType--district__p--b

APPENDIX B

Below are examples of data collection sites to obtain population level data, statistics, and community needs:

**NOTE: This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but does provide links to generally accepted non-partisan sites for data collection, population statistics, and demonstration of needs and issues.**

- Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT
  - Project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and a premier source of data on children and families.
  - [http://datacenter.kidscount.org/](http://datacenter.kidscount.org/)

- County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
  - The annual Rankings provide a revealing snapshot of how health is influenced by where we live, learn, work, and play. They provide a starting point for change in communities.
  - [https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/](https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/)

- Minnesota Compass
  - A social indicators project that measures progress in the state of Minnesota, its seven regions, 87 counties and larger cities. Compass tracks trends in topic areas such as education, economy and workforce, health, housing, public safety, and a host of others.
  - [http://www.mncompass.org/](http://www.mncompass.org/)

- Minnesota Department of Education
  - Provides district and school specific dashboard and reports.
  - [https://education.mn.gov/MDE/Data/](https://education.mn.gov/MDE/Data/)

- North Dakota Compass
  - A social indicators project that measures progress in the state of North Dakota, its eight regions, 53 counties, four Native American reservations, and larger cities. Compass tracks trends in topic areas such as children and youth, economy, health, housing, and workforce.

- North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
  - Provides district and school specific dashboard and reports.
  - [https://www.nd.gov/dpi/data/](https://www.nd.gov/dpi/data/)

- United States Census Bureau, Explore Census Data
  - Provides access to data about the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas. The data comes from several censuses and surveys including the decennial census, the American Community Survey, the American Housing Survey, and the Economic Census.
  - [https://data.census.gov/cedsci/](https://data.census.gov/cedsci/)
APPENDIX C

2021 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia

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<th>Household Size</th>
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<th>150%</th>
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For families/households with more than 8 persons, add $4,540 for each additional person.

Used to Determine Financial Eligibility for Certain Federal Programs:
https://aspe.hhs.gov/2021-poverty-guidelines