



**United Way**  
Central Alberta



## Community Impact Strategy 2026–2029

### Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that the communities we serve are located in the Indigenous traditional territories represented by Treaties 6 and 7, and Métis Region 3. We offer respect to this land and its 21 First Nations. United Way Central Alberta is committed to building stronger relationships with Indigenous, Métis and Inuit Peoples in this region to ensure that we contribute to meaningful lasting prosperity. We pursue this work as individuals and as an organization.

## ABOUT UNITED WAY CENTRAL ALBERTA

**Mission:** Strengthening vital connections that support people in need across our communities.

**Vision:** Thriving communities where everyone can reach their potential.

**Charitable Purpose:** As a unifying force for social change, United Way Central Alberta (UWCA) exists to serve those experiencing vulnerability in our local communities and to create an equitable future for all.

UWCA is working to create communities where everyone has the resources, opportunities and support they need to thrive. We achieve this by:

- INVESTING donor dollars in vital programs that impact local communities
- PARTNERING with citizens, community agencies, businesses and government to address the social issues people face every day
- BUILDING capacity in communities to help people live vibrant and resilient lives
- ADVOCATING for change locally, provincially and nationally

### Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion & Reconciliation

We are committed to creating spaces where diversity is celebrated, inclusion is evident, and everyone can reach their potential.

Equity remains foundational to UWCA's investment and partnership decisions. We recognize that improving the lives of everyone in the communities we serve means

intentionally removing barriers for those most harmed by them. This includes addressing the beliefs, attitudes, systems, policies, and practices that privilege some and marginalize others. We understand that addressing equity is about deliberate systemic change within UWCA.

We are committed to reconciliation and building stronger relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples on these lands to ensure we contribute to meaningful lasting prosperity. It also means working in closer partnership with the people and communities that our work is intended to benefit. We continue to look at our internal attitudes and systems, including actively working to increase representation in decision-making to ensure this work is done thoughtfully.

## **BUILDING UPON OUR EXISTING CI STRATEGY – A Living Document**

### **A Quick Summary**

UWCA's Community Impact Strategy was revised through a facilitated, community-informed process that engaged our volunteer-led Community Impact Council, community serving organizations, and community stakeholders and members. This collaborative approach helped shape the language we use, our priorities, and outcomes.

Community engagement through surveys and feedback confirmed our priorities around basic needs, mental health, and brighter futures. Themes included increased complexity of need and rural capacity strain, the importance of culturally responsive supports, prevention, early intervention, and community-led solutions.

### **The Process We Took**

In 2023, we made fundamental changes to our mission and vision, our community impact priorities, and how we partner in community. The development of the 2026–2029 Community Impact Strategy is a continuation of our deliberate shift toward a more collaborative, community held, and equity centred way of setting direction for United Way Central Alberta.

The intent of this strategy cycle was to ensure that UWCA's next chapter would continue to reflect and respond to community identified needs, lived experiences, and emerging system level pressures. This commitment positioned the strategy as an expression of UWCA's values and emphasis on longer-term, trust-based investment and relationship-based work across Central Alberta's diverse communities.

UWCA's volunteer-led Community Impact Council (CIC) facilitated a review process designed to elevate a range of voices and prioritize meaningful dialogue. The approach created structured opportunities for shared learning, and explored the implications of demographic, social, and economic trends in Central Alberta. Over the fall of 2025, the CIC examined the current strategy, the status of the region, and emerging research and feedback from local, provincial, and national sources.

The CIC is intentionally composed of volunteer individuals with diverse lived, professional, and volunteer experience, representing a mixture of geographies, sectors, and population groups. This diversity allowed the Council to bring multiple lenses to questions of impact, equity, and community context. CIC's work moved beyond reviewing recommendations; they were asked to question assumptions and collaboratively explore the challenges and opportunities within Central Alberta's current realities.

Community insight was critical and integrated into the process. UWCA gathered direct community-based organizations' input through conversations, as well as a broad scale agency survey on emerging priorities, sector challenges and needs. Anonymous surveys surfaced experiences that are not always present in formal consultation tables, especially around access challenges, cultural responsiveness, and perceptions of inclusion.

CIC dedicated time to review language and definition work, an area recognized as critical for equity and accessibility. Council members examined how terms such as *outreach*, *responsive*, and *safe* are interpreted by different communities, and how language can unintentionally include or exclude groups. As an example, in several granting streams, we shifted wording from "culturally based" toward "culturally responsive" to clarify our intention to refer beyond race and ethnicity, but also lived experience, identity, language, geographic context, and community belonging. This change reflects our intent towards broader inclusion.

Several themes emerged through the CIC review sessions, community surveys, and facilitation inputs: the increasing complexity of need in our region, the growing importance of prevention and early intervention, and the necessity of community led and culturally responsive solutions, particularly for historically underserved and rural communities. Council members also highlighted ongoing capacity strains within small and rural organizations, emphasizing the need for UWCA to play a meaningful role in convening, coordinating, and building relationships across sectors.

Through these collaborative processes, the Council reaffirmed that UWCA's three strategic pillars: **Basic Needs, Mental Health, and Brighter Futures**, remain essential and relevant for the region. While the pillars themselves are consistent with the 2023–2025 Strategy, several granting streams were refined to reflect our learnings.

Looking forward, the CIC's work positions the 2026–2029 Community Impact Strategy to be clearer, more accessible, and grounded in trust and transparency. The process has established a foundation that supports longer-term impact addressing community needs, while also embracing ongoing learning and adaptation.

The following pages outline our strategies for supporting positive change in Central Alberta. We will partner with community-based organizations whose work aligns with these strategies. We will plan together how best to measure how lives have been changed.

Applications for multi-year funding will be available in March 2026, and in April 2026 for Project Funding and small grants.



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## OUR STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE LIVES IN CENTRAL ALBERTA

### FOCUS AREA 1: BASIC NEEDS

Ensuring access to basic needs.

#### The change we want to see:

People experiencing poverty are supported to access essential services.

#### The impact this will have:

Central Albertans can meet their basic needs.

#### Our strategies for success:

- **INVEST IN PROGRAMS** that address the following strategy. We will work with successful applicants to identify outcome measures.

##### Multi-year Program Grants:

- 1. Support people who are navigating the complex system of government and social services, trying to meet their basic needs.
- **LEVERAGE UWCA PROGRAMS and PARTNERSHIPS** to reduce barriers for people who are struggling to meet their basic needs.
- **BUILD CAPACITY** and understanding of the impact of poverty and resources that make a difference.
- Support **ADVOCACY** efforts within the community and all levels of government.

### FOCUS AREA 2: MENTAL HEALTH

Increasing access to suitable mental health services.

#### The change we want to see:

People who are facing a mental health issue, addiction or trauma are helped in a manner that meets their uniqueness.

#### The impact this will have:

People will have the confidence and skills to move forward and lead a fulfilled life.

### Our strategies for success:

- **INVEST** in programs that address one of the following 3 strategies. We will work with successful applicants to identify outcome measures.

#### Multi-year Program Grants:

1. Improve access to culturally responsive mental health and addictions support or intervention programs. Programs must be led by individuals and/or organizations for whom the program intends to support.
  2. Improve access to affordable and timely counselling services.
  3. Increase opportunities for youth to build healthy relationships with family, peers, adults and community.
- **CULTIVATE PARTNERSHIPS** in local communities to better understand what is occurring and how we can help create positive, lasting change.
  - **BUILD CAPACITY** by talking openly about mental health and sharing our platform with people leading this work in the community. 211 is an important part of the network of resources.
  - Support **ADVOCACY** efforts within the community and with all levels of government.

### **FOCUS AREA 3: BRIGHTER FUTURES**

Creating positive futures with new possibilities.

#### **The change we want to see:**

People are able to build skills and strengthen relationships for a better future for themselves and their family.

#### **The impact this will have:**

People are confident, connected and equipped to move forward and lead a fulfilled life.

### Our strategies for success:

- **INVEST** in programs that address one of the following 5 strategies. We will work with successful applicants to identify outcome measures.

#### Multi-year Program Grants:

1. Increase access to culturally responsive parenting programs and supports. Programs must be led by individuals and/or organizations for whom the program intends to support.

2. Increase access to culturally responsive youth programs. Programs must be led by individuals and/or organizations for whom the program intends to support.
  3. Increase access to programs that support the development of essential life skills in youth.
  4. Increase access to outreach services that enable independent living.
  5. Support households experiencing family violence.
- **INVEST** in projects that address one of the following 5 strategies. We will work with successful applicants to identify outcome measures.

One-time Project Grants:

1. Create opportunities that strengthen youth and young adults who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.
  2. Are innovative ideas that improve employment prospects.
  3. Are innovative ideas that enable people to build assets and gain financial security.
  4. Create opportunities that strengthen members of the Indigenous community. Projects must be led by individuals/organizations for whom the project intends to support.
  5. Create opportunities that strengthen systemically underserved communities. Projects must be led by individuals/organizations for whom the project intends to support.
- **LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS** to support opportunities in communities across Central Alberta.
  - **BUILD CAPACITY** through Small Grant funding, training opportunities and resources for community-based organizations.
  - Support **ADVOCACY** efforts within the community and all levels of government.