



Frequently Asked Questions

“What does United Way of Anchorage do?”

For over 50 years, United Way of Anchorage has worked to measurably improve the quality of people’s lives and build a stronger community by creating lasting changes in four action areas.

“What’s an Action Area?”

An action area further identifies and guides United Way’s work. For instance, in our Help Kids Succeed action area, we are aligning our efforts and resources to ensure our children and youth have opportunities to develop physically, socially, and emotionally to their full potential. Within each action area are specific goals.

ACTION AREA: Helping Kids Succeed

Anchorage children and youth have opportunities to develop to their full potential.

- Children enter school ready to learn

- Youth make positive choices leading to success in school and life

ACTION AREA: Improving People’s Health

Anchorage residents maximize their physical and mental well-being.

- Anchorage residents have access to quality health care.

- Anchorage residents decrease substance abuse.

ACTION AREA: Meeting Essential Needs

Anchorage residents meet their basic needs daily and in times of unexpected crisis.

- Anchorage residents are able to care for themselves including food, shelter and safety.

ACTION AREA: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods

Anchorage families are equipped with the tools to achieve financial stability and are actively involved in their neighborhoods and our community.

- Anchorage residents easily connect with vital community services and volunteer opportunities

- Anchorage residents achieve long-term financial stability and independence

“What do you mean by lasting change?”

When we talk about lasting change, we’re talking about a change in conditions at a community level – be it attitudes, behaviors, processes, or systems— that not only alleviates today’s troubles, but also reduces tomorrow’s needs. Our goal is long lasting change that prevents problems from happening in the first place.

“What is the Community Fund?”

The United Way of Anchorage Community Fund is dedicated to the activities and strategies aligned toward the targeted goals in the four action areas.



Frequently Asked Questions

“How can I be assured that the money I give to the Community Fund really makes a difference?”

United Way established the Community Action Teams, and each volunteer has a broad range of community skills, experiences, and perspectives. These teams guide our work in strengthening families and communities, helping kids succeed, improving people’s health, and meeting essential needs. Each team recommends targeted community goals for their areas, reviews action plans, helps define results and assessment measures, determines the resources needed to accomplish the goal, identifies incentives for collaboration, and allocates funding within their action area.

“Why should I give to the Community Fund?”

A gift to the Community Fund is the only gift you can make that supports the entire community and not just one person, one agency, or one cause or issue. Your gift to the Community Fund is also used to leverage additional investments that significantly increase the resources available to tackle major community concerns.

“How much of my contribution actually gets where it is needed?”

We’re proud of our efficiency. Ninety-two percent of your gift goes to improving people’s lives and building a stronger community. Eight percent of your donation helps to pay for the fund-raising and administration costs at United Way. Thanks to the work of thousands of volunteers, those costs are well below national averages.

“Does United Way fund agencies with religious affiliations?”

Some of our agencies have religious origins, such as the Catholic Social Services and the Lutheran Social Services of Alaska.

Funded social service programs within these, as within all our agencies, can be used by anyone in our community regardless of their religious affiliation; however United Way funds may not be used for religious purposes.

“Does the money I give to the Community Fund stay in my community?”

Yes. Your United Way contribution is an investment in your community. Local decisions by local people put your contribution to work here.

“How can I be sure my money is going where I direct it to go?”

Both an internal and external audit is performed annually to certify the correctness of our operations.



Frequently Asked Questions

“How does the work of United Way today differ from what United Way of Anchorage was doing five or six years ago?”

Five years ago, United Way was raising and distributing money to its service partners. The service partners were doing (and continue to do) good and important work in the community. However, if you asked what difference your gift made, other than anecdotal stories of success, United Way really couldn't tell you much. Today, United Way is aligning its resources to goals targeted at changing community conditions. **Today, United Way can talk about results. We can tell you that your gift helped to decrease the number of hungry people in Anchorage.** Under United Way's leadership seven hunger organizations are working together in new ways – the result is a 30% increase in the amount of food available for distribution to hungry families.

Five years ago, the only resource United Way brought to the table was the money raised in workplace campaigns and from individuals. **Today, United Way uses the money raised to leverage grants from foundations and government sources that are focused on the specific goals in each action area.** These efforts have led to an additional \$5 million being invested in community work over the last three years.

Five years ago, United Way of Anchorage measured success based on how much money was raised and distributed. **Today, success is measured by the changes in the community conditions that lead to need in the first place.**

“If I choose to give my gift to a specific charity, how much of my gift actually gets to the charity?”

85.5 percent. United Way of Anchorage charges an 8 percent pledge processing fee and only distributes the funds actually collected. A three-year average of the unpaid pledges is currently 6.5 percent.

“Where does most of the United Way money come from?”

Of the dollars donated in Anchorage, 79 percent comes from individuals, the rest from corporations.

“Why do some agencies raise funds when they are already funded by United Way?”

Demand for services from funded agencies exceeds the dollars available from United Way; the funds provided to the agencies account for an average of 10 percent of their funding.



Frequently Asked Questions

“What is United Way of America and does United Way of Anchorage participate with it?”

United Way of America is a trade association for United Ways. It sets strict membership standards for local United Ways to ensure system integrity and accountability. It also provides research, information and best practices sharing, and other goods and services. United Way of America has its own volunteer board and sets its own policy for operation, including the salary and benefits of its executives. All 1,400 local United Ways are autonomous organizations that have their own volunteer boards and set their own policies for operation. United Way of Anchorage pays one percent of the amount raised in the annual campaign to belong to the organization.

“If I direct my gift to a service partner, how does my gift affect the amount United Way gives to that agency?”

United Way’s Community Action Teams make funding decisions based on activities that are aligned toward the targeted goals and to some extent aligned within the action areas. If a donor prefers to designate a gift to a service partner, the designated gift is directed to the specified agency less the pledge processing fee and estimated unfulfilled pledges. (See previous question and answer on page 34).

Designated dollars are the first dollars allocated to an agency. If the total allocation exceeds designations, monies are taken from the Community Fund to make up the difference.

For example: If the allocation for American Red Cross is \$150,000 and designated dollars are \$100,000, \$50,000 from the Community Fund is used to make up the difference.

If designated dollars to an agency exceed the total allocation amount, all designated gifts are forwarded to the agency.

For example: If designated gifts to Bean’s Café are \$100,000 and the total UW allocation for the year is \$80,000, \$100,000 would be forwarded to Bean’s Café.

“Does United Way fund programs that deal with human sexuality?”

United Way funds some educational programs that deal with human sexuality. These programs are aimed at reducing the incidence of unplanned pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. United Way does not fund programs that provide abortions.

“Can I direct my gift to one of the action areas?”

Yes, on your pledge form, mark the action area(s) that you would like to support. Community Action Team volunteers will direct your gift toward activities aligned to meet the goals in that action area.



Frequently Asked Questions

“Can I direct my gift to an organization that does not appear on the United Way of Anchorage service partners?”

Yes. To qualify for the Donor Option Program of United Way of Anchorage, an agency must have tax exempt status of the US internal Revenue Code of 1954 – 501 (c) (3). The agency must provide health and human care services in Alaska. Churches, religious programs, educational institutions and foundations, cultural groups, service clubs, legal defense funds and political organization are not eligible. If a non-qualifying agency is designated, United Way will notify the donor.

However, United Way of Anchorage does encourage those that do direct their gift to a specific agency to consider directing a portion of the gift to the Community Fund.

“I feel I am being pressured to give.”

Voluntary giving is what United Way is all about – no one should feel forced to give. In fact, United Way has a policy against coercion. The decision to give is strictly personal. If you feel you were coerced into making a pledge, please contact our office at 263-3842 for a confidential refund.

“Why aren’t all non-profit agencies a part of United Way?”

Any organization that works in the four action areas is encouraged to participate in addressing the goals. United Way of Anchorage is more inclusive than ever before, partnering with many organizations in the community to focus on the goals within each action area.