UWNWIL Basic Needs & Community Catalyst — Applicant FAQ

Answers reflect the 2026/2027 Basic Needs and Community Catalyst applications and UWNWIL guidance.

Q: What are the due dates and grant period?

A: Applications are due March 27th, 2026 at 4:00 PM. Committee review runs April-May 2026; awards announced June-July 2026. Quarterly reports for Community Catalyst are required. A basic Needs six-month progress report is due December 31, 2026. The Annual Impact Report for Basic Needs and Community Catalyst are due July 15, 2027.

Q: May we apply to both lanes? If yes, do we submit separate workplans/budgets?

A: Yes. Organizations may apply to both Basic Needs and Community Catalyst; however, only one lane will be funded per organization. Submit one application per lane with a distinct workplan, indicators, and budget for each.

Q: How much funding is available? Are there award caps?

A: Total funds depend on the UWNWIL annual campaign. Lane allocation is 20% Basic Needs and 80% Community Catalyst. Requested amounts should align with your scope and expected results.

Q: Are there priority ZIP codes or only counties?

A: Priority geography is by county (Stephenson, Jo Daviess, Carroll).

Q: How do you define unduplicated household vs. unduplicated individual?

A: An unduplicated household is one address/family unit counted once per grant year, regardless of multiple services. An unduplicated individual is a person counted once per grant year. Programs should choose one primary unit of service and use it consistently.

Q: How do we confirm ALICE status?

A: Use one of the following: (1) self-attestation form; (2) income verification against ALICE Threshold; or (3) program eligibility proxies (e.g., SNAP/WIC/LIHEAP/Medicaid). Keep verification on-site; submit de-identified counts only. Use the ALICE Income Status at www.unitedforalice.org/alice-income-status-tool

Q: Is an MOU required, and when?

A: For Catalyst, an MOU among partners is required upon grant acceptance (before funds are disbursed). It is encouraged at submission if available. For Basic Needs, MOUs are

optional unless your model relies on formal partners. If this is a school district partnership, an MOU with each school district must be provided before funding will commence.

Q: Are indirect/administrative costs allowed?

A: Yes only 10% of grant funds are allowed for indirect costs

Q: What are the payment terms?

A: Awards are paid in 12 equal monthly installments during the grant year, via ACH.

Q: What happens if we miss quarterly targets?

A: UWNWIL will provide technical assistance and may request a short corrective action plan. Persistent non-performance can affect continued funding and future funding.

B. Eligibility & Service Area

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: 501(c)(3) nonprofits in good standing with an office in, and providing services within, Stephenson, Jo Daviess, or Carroll County.

Q: Are public entities eligible?

A: No. Public entities (e.g., school districts, municipalities, departments) are not eligible to apply. They may participate as unfunded collaborators.

Q: May we use a fiscal sponsor?

A: No. Fiscal sponsorship is not permitted for this grant cycle.

Q: Is a match required?

A: No match is required. However, applicants are encouraged to leverage UWNWIL funds with other resources and not rely solely on UWNWIL for the program budget.

Q: May we serve people who live outside the three counties?

A: Not with UWNWIL funds, only residents of Stephenson, Jo Daviess, and Carroll Counties should be counted in reported results. Track and report out-of-county service separately.

C. Metrics, Outputs, and Proof

Q: Does prevention (eviction/utility) count the same as housing placement?

A: Yes. Prevention and placement both count toward housing stability outcomes. Use consistent definitions and keep a landlord/utility letter or assistance record on-site.

Q: How is 90-day housing retention measured?

A: The clock starts when assistance is provided (or when a lease begins). Verify retention at day 90 via landlord letter, lease record, or utility statement. If a client moves but remains stably housed, retention still counts.

Q: How do we convert food into outcomes?

A: Report simple outputs (meals, food boxes, home-delivered meal-days) and, if desired, convert to 'household-months of food secured' using a program-defined conversion (state your method in your report).

Q: For childcare/after-school, do the 60 days need to be consecutive?

A: No. Any 60 days of participation within the grant year qualifies (document with attendance logs).

Q: What qualifies for transportation to essentials?

A: Rides for work, health, benefits appointments, childcare/education, and essential errands. Keep a ride log with date, purpose code, and completion status.

Q: For benefits access, do pending applications count?

A: Yes. Pending applications qualify, but approved applications are preferred and should be reported separately when possible.

Q: What is a 'short success story'?

A: 150–300 words describing the barrier, the help provided, and the result. Composite stories are acceptable when individual stories pose privacy risks. Include pictures when allowable.

D. Collaboration & Process Metrics

Q: What is a process metric?

A: A measure of how the pathway performs across partners—for example: closed-loop referrals completed within 14 days, average time-to-service, or percent of new clients offered next-week access. Establish a 90-day baseline and a 12-month target.

Q: How do we set a 90-day baseline if the partnership is new?

A: Use the most recent 90 days of available data from each partner; if none exist, collect an initial 90-day baseline at project launch and set the year-end target accordingly.

Q: Do we have to use a specific referral platform?

A: No. Use any workable method (shared spreadsheet, forms, or a platform). At minimum, keep a dated referral log showing referral sent, received, and closed (service started or declined).

Q: How often should partner huddles occur and how do we document them?

A: Monthly is recommended. Keep an agenda, attendance list, and a short action log with owners and due dates. United Way will most likely be convening meetings with funders also.

Q: How are Catalyst outcomes weighed vs. Basic Needs outcomes?

A: Proposals are scored within their lane. Basic Needs emphasizes direct stabilization outputs and immediate outcomes; Catalyst emphasizes improvements in access, speed, and coordination plus milestone movement. ***It should be noted that 80% of funds available will be allocated to Community Catalyst and 20% to Basic Needs.**

Q: Can public entities be paid partners?

A: Public entities are not eligible to apply. They may participate as collaborators; funding to public entities is not allowed under this funding.

Q: What technology costs are allowable?

A: None. This funding is for programming specifically.

E. ALICE, Equity & Geography

Q: How should we estimate percent ALICE served?

A: Prefer self-attestation or income screen at intake; proxies via public benefit eligibility are acceptable. Use county-level ALICE data for context in your need statement.

Q: Is there a minimum ALICE reach threshold?

A: Proposals that credibly reach 75% ALICE population are more competitive; state your estimated percent ALICE and how you derived it.

F. Data, Privacy & Documentation

Q: What records must be kept on-site and for how long?

A: Keep one verification document per reported result (e.g., benefit approval, pay stub, landlord letter) for at least three years after the grant year.

Q: Do you ever collect Personally Identifiable Information?

A: No. Reports must be de-identified. Keep PII securely on-site only.

Q: Will there be monitoring?

A: UWNWIL may conduct site visits or request program presentations with advance notice.

G. Budget & Allowable Costs

Q: Are client assistance funds allowable? Are gift cards permitted?

A: Client assistance for essentials (e.g., rent, utilities, transportation, childcare) is allowable. Gift cards are not allowed.

Q: Can we revise budgets mid-year?

A: Yes, with prior written approval. Submit a brief request explaining the change and its impact on outcomes.

Q: Are indirect costs allowed?

A: 10% of funds are allowed for indirect costs including personnel.

H. Application Mechanics & Review

Q: What format should applications use?

A: The application will be available at uwni.org.

Q: Do you require letters of support or MOUs at submission?

A: Two Letters of support are requested. For Community Catalyst, an MOU is required upon grant acceptance (encouraged at submission).

Q: Will there be an informational applicant Q&A?

A: Yes. An informational session (date TBA) will be held in February. FAQs will be posted.

Q: How are proposals scored?

A: By need (using CHNA/IPLAN and ALICE data), clarity of plan, measurement quality, equity and reach across counties, feasibility, and (for Catalyst) collaboration strength and process metric.

Q: What is the reviewer conflict-of-interest policy?

A: Reviewers must disclose conflicts and recuse from scoring where conflicts exist.

I. Reporting Cadence & Changes

Q: What is due and when?

A: Basic Needs: semiannual outputs and outcomes (mid-year) and an Annual Impact Report (July 15, 2027). Catalyst: quarterly progress (milestones + process metric) and an Annual Impact Report.

Q: Can we correct a report after submission?

A: Yes. Submit a corrected version within 14 days of noticing an issue and notify your UWNWIL contact.

Late reports put you at risk of losing funding for this grant cycle. Do not accept the grant if you are not able to submit reports within the required deadlines.

Q: Can we change indicators or targets mid-year?

A: Yes, with prior written approval if the change improves impact or feasibility.

Q: What belongs in the year-end narrative?

A: Summarize numeric results, barriers removed, equity reach, and—if Catalyst—what was fixed and how the process metric improved.