

UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL MARYLAND

WHAT TOMORROW HOLDS

A SUMMARY OF OUR 2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

A plan for **evolving** our approach, **engaging** new audiences, and more **effectively serving** our region.

United Way of Central Maryland is a source of hope and help for communities across our region. We promote equity, create opportunity, and improve lives—and we do it more effectively every year.

We've seen firsthand what it takes to make real change. We've worked with neighborhood residents, leaders, private and nonprofit partners, and anchor institutions—and forged relationships among them. We've built connections with people working hard to make ends meet—and helped them attain stability. We've activated the untapped potential of our communities.

Along the way, we've learned a lot about what works and what doesn't. We discovered that the best way to build sustainable change is to identify neighborhood grassroots leaders and provide them with the support and resources to help bring their ideas to life. The era of prescriptive, top-down

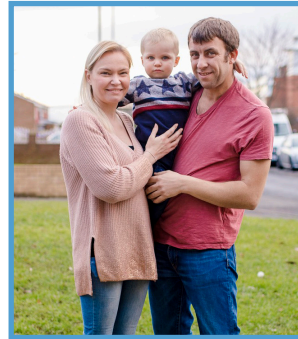
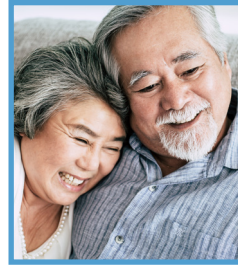
philanthropic support is over. We will play a leading role in defining and implementing new ways to ignite lasting change through partnership and collaboration.

Mapping Our Course

To better align our organizational trajectory with the goals, dreams, and needs of our community, United Way of Central Maryland engaged in a robust strategic planning process involving stakeholders from all levels of our organization and throughout our community. This document represents a high-level summary of the key findings from that process and our vision for what's to come—a plan for evolving our approach, engaging new audiences, and more effectively serving our region.

We excel at connecting compassionate individuals to causes they care about. Now, we are applying that collaborative spirit to work more closely with those we serve—amplifying the power of local leaders to drive change while helping our supporters achieve their philanthropic goals.

As social change innovators, we think creatively to develop and field-test powerful, unexpected solutions to deep-rooted problems. We know that those who live in the communities we serve are best positioned to take the lead in identifying and creating solutions to the issues they face in their own neighborhoods. And we rely on the strength and involvement of trustworthy organizations that share our mission to collaborate in the development and delivery of our programs. Working together allows us to deliver real results more quickly and efficiently than ever before, enriching the lives of all those who live in Central Maryland.



As we prepare to celebrate a century of service to the community in 2025, we commit to:

- Achieving greater impact faster
- Engaging communities to create and lead solutions for their most pressing challenges
- Removing barriers to help decrease the number of asset-limited, income-constrained, employed (ALICE) residents
- Building strong, multigenerational affinity for United Way and engaging more young people to participate in and support our work
- Developing more effective and robust corporate engagement programs and partnering with employers to create, implement, track, and measure social change initiatives
- Fostering an innovative, efficient, and effective United Way that meets the needs of today's communities, individuals, corporations, and funders

Our future will be marked by a new culture of collaborative engagement. By listening actively and gathering empirical data about the challenges facing residents, we'll craft sustainable, evidence-backed solutions and measures for accountability. Through our extensive network of service providers, nonprofits, and private and public partners, we'll tackle complex problems that require multifaceted solutions. And we'll leverage our robust data sources to help us track our improvements and ensure we continue to invest in efficient, effective approaches.

Since 2012,
98.5%
of families in our housing
programs remained housed



and **52%** of families in
our housing programs
experienced an increase
in income.



In 2017, we moved into
new headquarters in

Montgomery Park Business Center



that will
save more than \$2.5 million
to reinvest in the community
over the next 10 years.

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Our 211 program assists well over

100K+ calls/year

and operates in partnership with

key players that include the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
the **Maryland Crisis Line,** and **Lyft.**



The 2018

ALICE

**(Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained,
Employed) Report**



Our

1,000 Voices Project

provided an opportunity for more than 1,000 individuals to provide their perspective on their neighborhoods' greatest strengths, challenges, and possible solutions; their input has been taken into account across many programs, and helped to shape our strategic goals and objectives.

which showed that **38%**
of working-class families
can't afford Maryland's cost of living,
guides our work, informs our partners'
work, and drives legislative change.







In communities across Maryland, there are individuals and families fighting hard to get by—often working multiple minimum-wage jobs—who are still unable to afford the cost of living. This is the ALICE® population: Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed. Our neighbors and community members shouldn't have to live in this precarious position. We'll work hard to ensure that they don't.

ALICE encompasses 38% of all working-class families in the state. These are people who are active and contributing members of society, with jobs that range from caring for our children and aging parents, to building our homes and offices, to repairing our infrastructure, to nursing us back to health. They're vital to our communities, and yet they can't make ends meet. What's more, those with constrained incomes can't always afford basic necessities such as housing, food, transportation, and healthcare, and they lack sufficient savings or support systems for unforeseen emergencies. Even though they're working, their jobs don't offer sufficient wages or opportunities for advancement. In short, they're constantly trying to catch up—and an unexpected expense can wreak havoc in their lives.

United Way is taking bold steps to help them.

We're prepared to deploy our expertise and experience so that people can better provide for themselves and their families. What's more, we'll apply our strengths to connect people to resources—building bridges, facilitating partnerships, and inspiring productive and enduring programs and relationships. This work requires a thoughtful combination of personal empowerment and philanthropy. We'll continue to focus on the essentials of family stability:

-  **Housing**, to ensure that people have a decent and affordable place to call home
-  **Education**, focusing on reducing dropout rates and supporting students and their families
-  **Employment**, including job training so that people will be better qualified for more stable and higher-paying jobs
-  **Health**, to increase access to nutritious food and basic healthcare



ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK: LIFE ON THE ALICE EDGE

ALICE individuals are forever living on the edge. Many are just one unexpected expense away from financial ruin. And they are often caught in a bewildering Catch-22, whereby any small increase in income can actually turn into a disadvantage, disqualifying them from support services or benefits that are essential to their lives.

This was the case with Kelly, a working single mother who was just making ends meet on a \$32,000 a year salary and government benefits. When she got a raise that increased her earnings by a total of only \$100 yearly, she lost hundreds of dollars in monthly SNAP benefits, as well as subsidized medical assistance for her young son. Within a few short months, Kelly found herself facing eviction and the repossession of her car. "I thought we were going to lose everything," she recalled.

But then Kelly discovered a United Way program that helps families get back on their feet. The program provides housing assistance, help with meals and budgeting, guidance to help set financial goals, and access additional services. In only four months, Kelly got caught up on her bills. "I had to take a second job nights and weekends, but I've learned to stretch my paychecks. It hasn't been easy, but I would do anything to ensure that my son has a better life. United Way helped me see what I'm capable of, and when I look back on this I'll be able to say, 'I got us here.'"



"...and when I look back on this I'll be able to say 'I got us here.'"

- Kelly

We'll amplify the efforts of community members to drive change in their neighborhoods. We'll help reduce the population of Marylanders living as ALICE. And we'll build a powerful alliance of committed and involved supporters to ensure that we succeed—today and tomorrow. By creating a new culture of empowerment supported by philanthropy and volunteerism, we can shape a movement that will transform under-resourced neighborhoods into thriving communities where all people can live their best lives.

The United Way Value Proposition

Setting a clear course for our work, we will:



Be the safe, trusted resource for tackling complex problems



Provide help to those who seek it



Connect those who want to help—individuals, employers, and funders—with concrete and meaningful ways to do so



Steering these efforts are a number of fundamental beliefs that inspire and motivate us. We believe:



That powerful leaders exist not only in well-resourced boardrooms but also in under-resourced neighborhoods



That employers and policymakers have a unique opportunity—and obligation—to give back to their communities



That we can increase our effectiveness by becoming more innovative, data driven, and outcomes focused. And that change must happen now.

Putting these beliefs into action means evolving our model and transforming the way we operate. By 2025, we will be a new United Way, still committed to our core values and mission, but more agile, more efficient, and better able to mobilize and serve where needed. We will connect community leaders with the resources and networks they need to drive solutions for their communities; we will work closely with them and other partners to test and deploy new services and support; and we will build and strengthen new programs before entrusting them to others who can steward and lead them.

This change relies on an ever-growing base of philanthropic support. We are developing new solutions for employers, employees, and individuals that include a robust online platform for philanthropy and an array of affinity groups and volunteer opportunities. As trusted advisors, we will help our community members and supporters tackle the root causes of problems while acknowledging the systemic nature of our communities' challenges.

These core values help ensure we never lose sight of what we believe and the impact we work to achieve.



Collaboration

We do better when we share ideas and build meaningful partnerships. We are stronger together.



Empowerment

We support leaders and change agents within the communities we serve and help donors direct their gifts to the causes they most care about.



Balance

We bring the same energy and attention to address both systemic issues and specific neighborhood, family, and individual needs.



Evidence

We gather meaningful data from multiple sources and effectively leverage it to make informed decisions.



Transparency

We are responsible stewards of community resources, placing the highest priority on transparency and accountability.



Action and Results

We unite and engage the community to make change together, producing results that benefit us all.

Our Mission:

To improve lives by empowering leaders and mobilizing the caring power of our communities.

Our Vision:

Happy, thriving communities where all people live their best lives.

The road ahead will be challenging—but dramatic, transformative change never comes easily. We are ready and able to realize the goals of this plan.

Why are we confident that we are up to the task? Because we are game-changers, bridge-builders, and problem-solvers. We mobilize nonprofits and government agencies, individuals and foundations, employers, and the private sector to drive positive change. We are deeply invested in the region we serve and are respected across the country. And we have the expertise, connections, and tenacity to lead tomorrow’s philanthropic movement—fueled by the ideas and expertise of local leaders, driven by partnerships, and directly meeting the needs of those who want to make a difference.

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United Way
 of Central Maryland

To learn more about how to join us, and to receive updates about our progress implementing our 2020-2025 strategic plan, please visit our website: UWCM.ORG.