



United Way of Greater Chattanooga Volunteer Advocate Role Description

Overview of UWGC Community Investment

United Way of Greater Chattanooga's (UWGC) mission is to unite people and resources in building a stronger, healthier community. We envision a community where all people achieve their full human potential through education, stability, and health & well-being. From the unique position at the center of the nonprofit, government, philanthropic, and business communities, UWGC drives focused collaboration among our partners to address community-specific avenues for everyone to engage in creating impact.

At the core of UWGC's work is uniting people and resources in building a stronger, healthier community. One of the ways we do that is by deploying resources raised from community members back into strong, effective local nonprofits who are creating transformational change. The purpose of UWGC's Community Investments is to drive transformational change in our community by directing our limited resources towards data-driven efforts that deliver the highest return on investment as measured by education, stability, and health & well-being outcomes within the Steps to Success framework. We make those investments through 3 funds: the Impact, Catalyst and Bridge Funds.

United Way's grantmaking process has long been different than many organizations: for years, we have relied on community volunteers to lead and drive decisions about the strategic investment of resources in the community. Using an approach similar to participatory grantmaking, Community Volunteers representing the scope of our 6-county region judge, score, and recommend how much money is invested in the organizations and programs we fund. Donors entrust United Way's volunteer review process to make the best use of their money. United Way staff guide, facilitate, share data and community need, and help frame the process based on best practices, but ultimately funding decisions are directed by community volunteers representing the community itself.

In January 2023, we will release our collaborative and competitive application process for two Community Investment funds:

1. Impact Fund: Investing in local nonprofits through competitive grants for collaborative and transformational work to find solutions to systemic issues in our community.
2. Catalyst Fund: Accelerating impact by investing in innovation and nonprofit capacity.

Participatory grantmaking denotes the need for participation – that is why UWGC worked to design and develop the infrastructure of Community Investments to depend upon the *community, not the organization*.

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Volunteer Advocates Purpose & Description

The purpose of the Community Investment Volunteer Advocates (VAs) is to provide an impartial and objective review for all applications; bring community voice into the investment process; and increase capacity to cultivate deep, meaningful relationships through empowering and supporting organizations. Responsibilities include reading, reviewing, and evaluating three or more assigned grant applications; learning about and advocating for awarded organization(s); and becoming a resource for expertise and capacity-building for awarded organization(s). VAs will and should reflect the diversity and uniqueness of our 6-county region of Greater Chattanooga. Individuals of various backgrounds, demographics, professional and personal expertise, passions, and goals bring deep value to the scope of impactful work for resource investment.

Volunteer Requirements & Qualifications

This group of volunteers must have a civic awareness and understand and believe in the goal of our community to truly work towards opportunity for all. These volunteers must consist of individuals with expertise in one or more of the following areas: community planning; awareness of community needs and assets; expertise in the area(s) of education, stability/economic mobility, and/or health & well-being; data and learning; equity, diversity, and inclusion expertise; financial expertise; or legal expertise.

Volunteer Commitment & Expectations

- Volunteer Advocates will meet annually from March to May to review, score, and recommend funding to the Community Investment Committee.
- Each term is three (3) consecutive years with the opportunity to reapply and enroll after term completion
- Attend VA trainings in March and April
- Commit to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in all decision-making
- Commit to acting in an ethical manner (i.e. full disclosure, record any conflicts of interest).
- Align with and practice United Way's Organizational values
- There is no minimum financial requirement
- Bring your best – expertise, community connections, business, government, philanthropy, and passions.

Benefits of Volunteering with UWGC

1. Build new and existing relationships with members of our community and further connect them to United Way of Greater Chattanooga.
2. Gain an understanding of key issues in our community to invest in the best strategies and solutions.
3. Learning and development of skills such as professional credibility, processes, operations, leadership, interpersonal communication, decision-making, budgeting, and investments.
4. Access to a network of people who share your commitment to this region and serving all people in an equitable manner.
5. Expand network across a diverse scope of stakeholders, experiences, programs, and sectors to understand and impact all people.

6. Maximize passions and expertise to make transformational impact with our community.
7. Opportunity to find pathways to achieve your vision and goals in the community.

Time Commitment

Volunteer Advocates commit to a 2.5-hour training and orientation; 3-5 hours of reading, reviewing, and scoring applications for recommendations; and 1-2 hours of engaging with applicants (optional). Meetings occur during regular business hours (see [Volunteer Calendar](#) for more details). This time commitment is important in order to fulfill the role and responsibilities to donors, advocates, volunteers, partners, and the nonprofit community.

Volunteer Assignment & Tenure

Volunteers are assigned to a minimum of three applications each based upon their area of expertise and geographical area of service of UWGC's 6-county region:

- Hamilton County
- Marion & Sequatchie County
- North Georgia: Catoosa, Dade, and Walker County

A Volunteer may serve a total of three (3) consecutive years. Volunteers must renew enrollment on an annual basis. Consideration for continued participation is given by the length of tenure, attendance, number of volunteer applicants from a single company and continued interest in volunteering.

UWGC Staff Support

The UWGC Community Investments Team is committed to ensuring Volunteer Advocates have all tools necessary to make informed and equitable decisions. Staff serve in a liaison capacity between VAs and the Partner Organization. They will provide materials to VAs before each meeting. It is then the VA's responsibility to study and review the information and ask their staff liaison to send clarifying questions to Partner Organization's leadership so that an informed recommendation can be made. United Way staff members do not lead committee discussions. This ensures the funding process is sound and driven by the volunteers.

Staff supports volunteer efforts by:

- Coordinating Partner Organization communication
- Providing consultation to Partner Organizations to ensure receipt of data that is both accurate and timely
- Help analyze financial and program data from Partner Organizations
- Conduct training for volunteers including technical platform training on Apply™, ethical application review, and community needs
- Research, frame, and write the RFP and rubric, with input from volunteers and community
- Gather and analyze performance and outcomes data from grantees
- Offer year-round support "beyond the check" to funded partners