



LIVE UNITED



United Way of King County

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015–2020

OUR MISSION

United Way of King County brings caring people together to give, volunteer and take action to help people in need and solve our community's toughest challenges.

It takes everyone pulling together to make our culture rich, our economy prosperous and our society humane. In a world of clashing ideas and fragmented attention, this isn't easy. Fortunately there are still organizations with the trust to draw diverse people together, get agreement and get to work.

United Way is such an organization. With support of individual donors, volunteers, businesses, foundations, public funders and human service agencies, we are positioned to build a community where people have homes, students graduate and families are financially stable.

When people join with United Way they magnify the impact they have with their dollars and their ideals. They claim their stake in making our whole community stronger and fairer. They help individuals and families struggling today and invest in social changes to prevent problems tomorrow.

OUR VISION

Our vision is captured in our slogan, LIVE UNITED. We believe that as individuals, families and communities we are stronger if we support each other, especially in moments of vulnerability. We provide a way for people to connect and turn their generosity into large-scale good.

Seattle and King County are currently experiencing strong economic growth and low unemployment, yet many people are being left behind. Income disparities are widening and housing costs are high. Homelessness has increased dramatically. Poverty is shifting to the suburbs and growing, particularly among children and youth. 35% of low-income children enter kindergarten ready to learn, and high school graduation rates for low-income youth are less than 70%. The region has at least 15,000 youth who have dropped out of high school and aren't working. All of these issues disproportionately affect people of color, including many of the region's recent immigrants and refugees.

Reaching Higher

In the last decade United Way of King County has played a leading role in lifting thousands of people out of homelessness, preparing thousands of low-income children for success in school, and ensuring that thousands of vulnerable families could meet basic needs during the Great Recession and its aftermath. Yet acute problems remain, and we must get to even greater impact. Here's how:



Be even more focused, concentrating on issues that affect the most vulnerable and on which we can have measurable influence. Part of this will be taking account of how many problems disproportionately affect communities of color and, working closely with those affected, creating and funding solutions that enable greater equity.



Generate more resources. In our increasingly wealthy region we have the opportunity to attract more support. To succeed we will need to communicate what we do more powerfully, deepen our connections to existing supporters, and create paths for new people to meet and engage with us outside the workplace. Digital channels will be key.




Exert more leverage. We will continue to multiply our impact beyond those dollars we raise and invest. We will mobilize thousands of volunteers and their skills for a multitude of roles. We will rally peer funders around a common vision. We will help return more state and federal tax money to the community. With help from influential volunteers, we will effectively advocate for specific changes to public policy and systems that will benefit the most vulnerable.

The Change We Seek in the Community

Our aim is measurable change in key indicators of community well-being. This isn't something we can deliver alone; it will take the coordinated efforts of many other players, including our nonprofit partners and fellow funders. But with our financial, volunteer and government resources coupled to our influence and leverage, we are positioned to play an important role in turning these ambitions into reality. Our goals:

80% 
of kids are ready for kindergarten

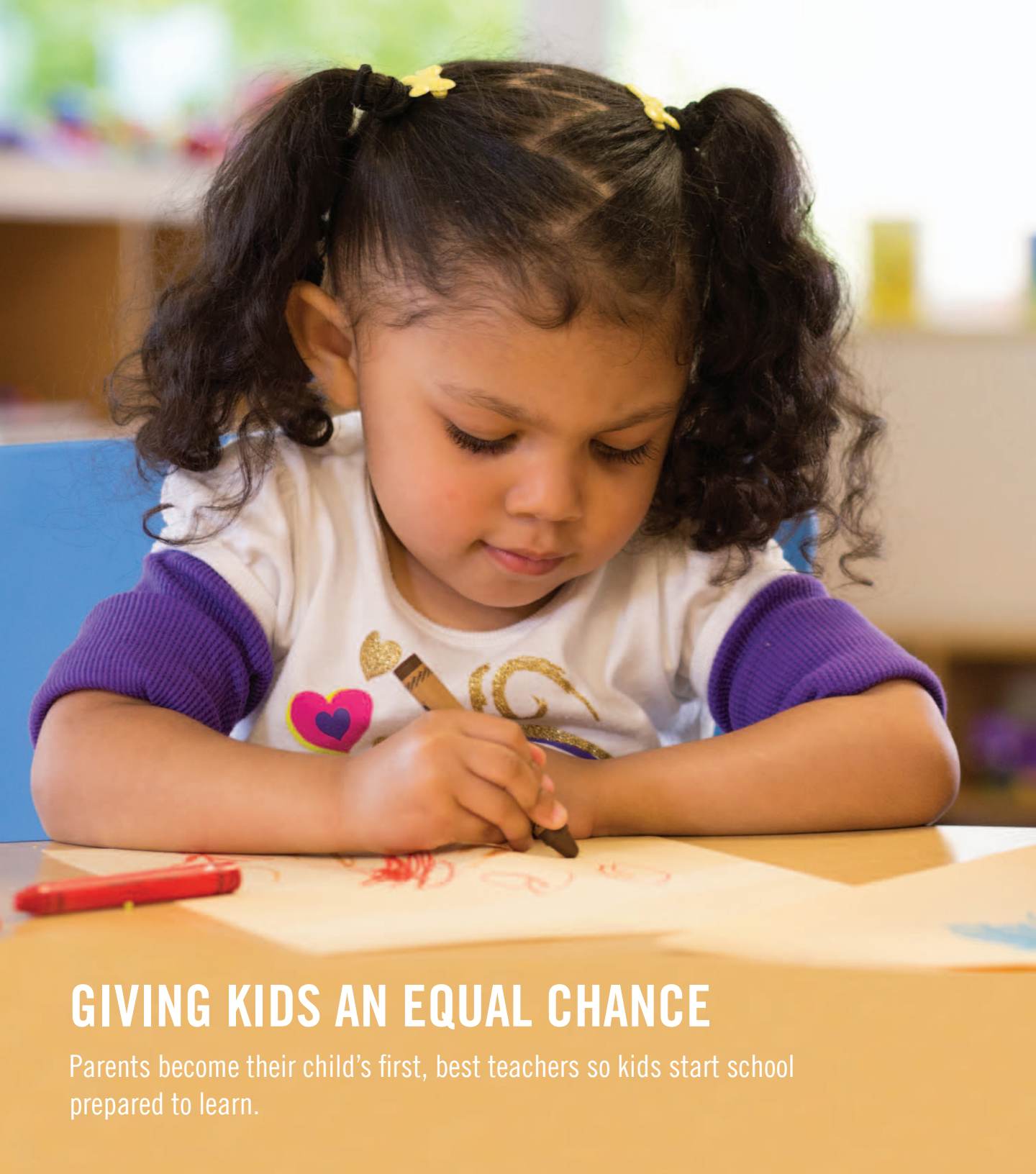
50% 
of disconnected youth are on the path to success

50,000 
people rise out of poverty

50% 
reduction in the number of unsheltered people in the annual One Night Count

To achieve the above we will need to grow our base of resources and supporters, specifically:

- Progressively increase annual dollars given directly to United Way by \$10 million
- Run a multi-year campaign during the plan period, resulting in one "breakthrough" year in which dedicated revenues would be \$10 million higher
- Retain a high percentage of current donors and add a net 10,000 new donors
- Attract 10,000 people in their 20s and 30s as active and committed United Way Emerging Leaders



GIVING KIDS AN EQUAL CHANCE


Parents become their child’s first, best teachers so kids start school prepared to learn.

PARENT SUPPORT. Helping parents succeed as their child’s first, best teachers will be central. Our signature parent-support effort will remain the **Parent-Child Home Program**, a highly successful evidence-based program for very low-income, socially isolated families. Those served include young single parents, immigrant and refugee families struggling in a new culture, and families experiencing homelessness. Since 2010 we have driven a five-fold expansion to 1,000 families and are having growing success in generating the external support (from public levies, school districts and other philanthropies) to keep the program strong.

BETTER CHILD CARE AND ATTENTION TO DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS. Alongside our parent-support investments, we will make targeted grants to improve the availability and quality of child care and preschool for low-income working families. And we will put money into programs that succeed in detecting and treating developmental delays very early in a child’s life, when they are most easily overcome.

GAUGING SUCCESS. All of our efforts in this area are designed to move one big community-level metric: kindergarten readiness in King County. In concert with partners, our five-year goal is:

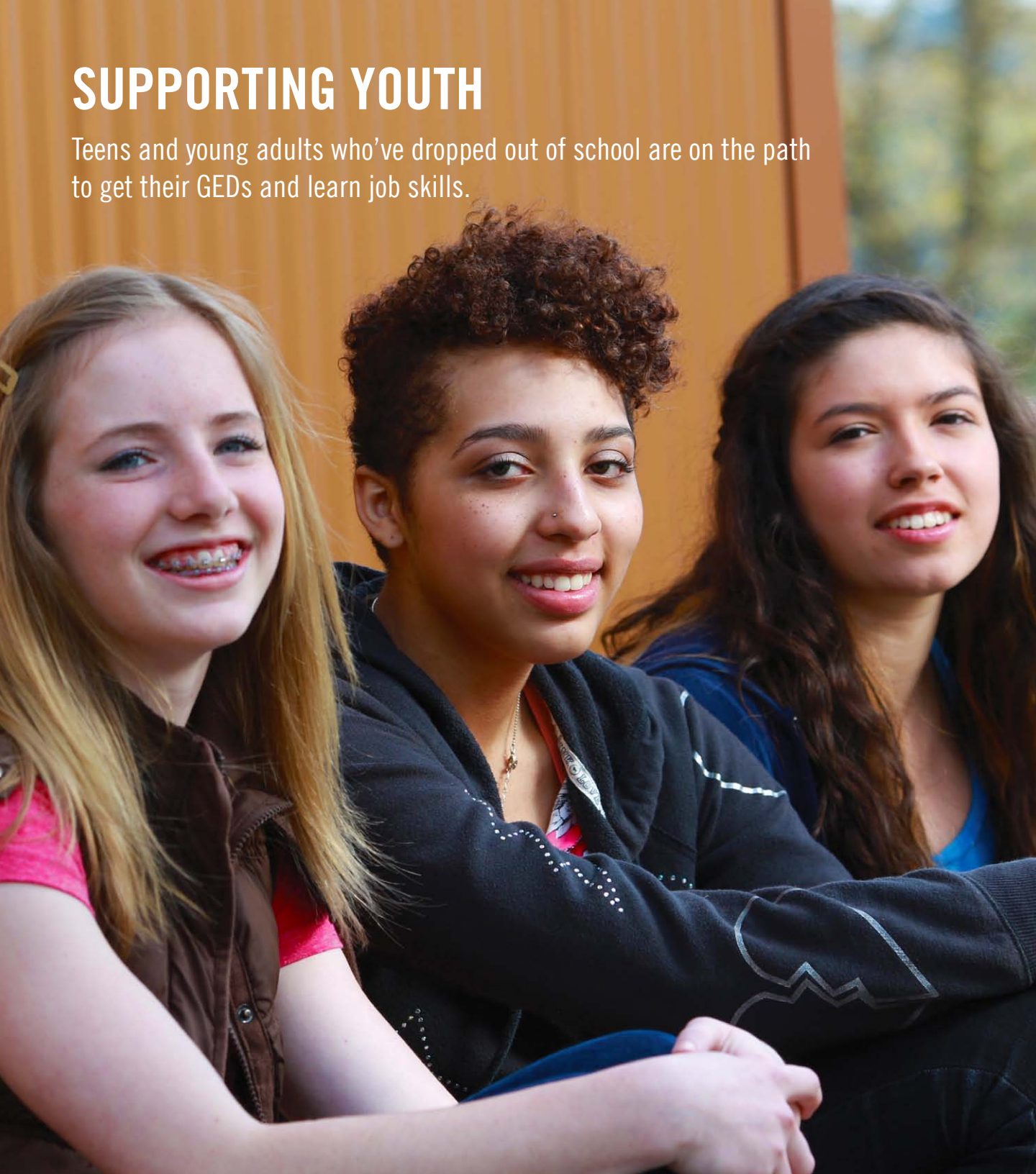


 **YEAR 1 UNITED WAY GOAL:** Help 5,000 parents be better able to provide a nurturing and educational home environment for their children.

Science tells us that brain development in a child’s early years is critical for a strong start in life—and a strong start in life often leads to better outcomes all the way through. Reams of research, including by Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman, show that money spent on early childhood yields some of the strongest returns on investment of any social program. This is therefore a bedrock prevention strategy for us. Our work will continue to focus on the most vulnerable young children living in poverty, including those with developmental delays.

SUPPORTING YOUTH

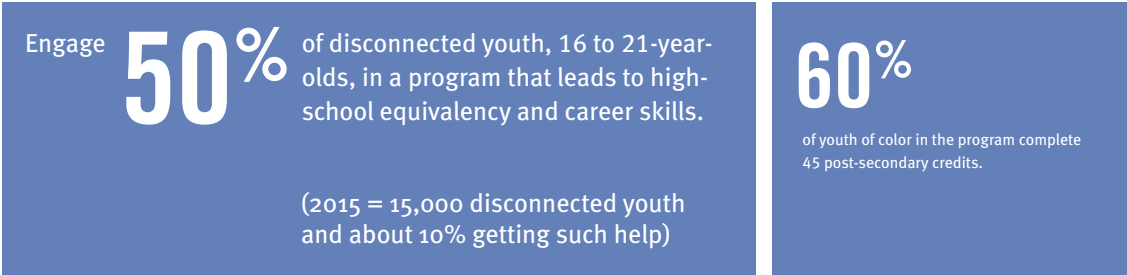
Teens and young adults who've dropped out of school are on the path to get their GEDs and learn job skills.




OLDER YOUTH. Our signature initiative is **Reconnecting Youth**, designed to help young people who have dropped out of school earn their high-school equivalency and then gain the skills and credentials for a solid career. The program is another example of using United Way dollars to leverage other resources, as our investment lets the community fully tap an available stream of state dollars for this purpose.

SCHOOL-AGE YOUTH. We will continue working actively to keep youth in school and on a path to graduation. Our funding will target programs that foster social-emotional skills and the ability to persevere and make good choices.

GAUGING SUCCESS. By 2020 we seek to:



 **YEAR 1 UNITED WAY GOAL: 1,605 youth** formally engaged in getting their high-school equivalency and career skills.

For youth who didn't get a strong start in the early years, we want to intervene at key points to help them get back on track. Otherwise human potential is lost and, as research shows, social costs rise for outlays like unemployment, welfare and criminal justice.



KEEPING FAMILIES STABLE

People have the tools to escape poverty, and kids have access to nutritious food every day.

INCREASING FINANCIAL SECURITY. Our signature effort will remain our **Free Tax Preparation Campaign**. It uses intensively trained United Way volunteers to help working families prepare their taxes for free and secure the credits and deductions they qualify for, notably the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC can be worth thousands of dollars to an individual family and is widely seen as the nation's most potent anti-poverty tool.

MAKING SURE PEOPLE HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT. Families who are struggling to get by often can't keep food on the table or are settling for food that is cheap but nutritionally poor. To help, United Way has long supported food banks and other parts of the emergency food system. We will continue to do so.

Because of the cascade of benefits it brings to child health, academic performance, family finances and more, our signature food effort in coming years will center on **childhood nutrition**.

We will expand our work to get all eligible kids school breakfast, lunch and after-school meals in the academic year, as well as summer meals when school is out. While these efforts will require United Way funding, they will also have a large multiplier effect by leveraging federal revenue streams that are underutilized compared to other communities and states.

PROVIDING A PLACE TO TURN IN CRISIS. Many events can hurtle an individual or family into crisis, from a job loss or illness, to the breakup of a relationship or an act of violence. United Way stands with people at times of such vulnerability by supporting the 2-1-1 help and information line, disaster relief agencies, and a variety of counseling and shelter services.

GAUGING SUCCESS. We will measure our progress against two community-level indicators. As in our other work, we will need the coordinated efforts of other players too. By 2020 we seek to:

Help **50,000**
people rise out of poverty

Reduce the number of school-aged children in South King County who are food-insecure to **10%**
(2015 = 20%)

YEAR 1 UNITED WAY GOAL: 22,000 low-income people access free tax preparation services securing \$30 million in federal refunds, including \$10 million in Earned Income Tax Credits.

YEAR 1 UNITED WAY GOAL: 632,500 meals served to low-income kids during summer 2015; 3,000 students benefit from school-based Nutrition Hubs.

Twelve percent of people in King County live in poverty. That means a 2015 annual income of \$22,213 — or less — for a family of four. Thousands of others get by with only slightly more. These families are in a precarious state, often only a paycheck or accident away from hunger, a utility cut-off, or even homelessness.

ENDING HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness becomes rare, and if it does happen, it is brief and one-time so people rebound quickly.

RARE. We will continue to advocate for preventing homelessness in the first place by stopping the discharge of people from hospitals, jails and foster care onto the streets. And in the case of foster youth, we will actively help identify and assist those young people most likely to end up homeless.

BRIEF AND ONE-TIME. When someone becomes homeless it is a personal and community crisis. Our signature effort, Crisis Response, will connect people to immediate services through outreach and emergency shelter, the first steps to getting people into housing. “Navigators” will work with people on the streets to find immediate solutions that fit their individual needs—from reconnecting with family, to the money for a security deposit or car repair, to a referral to an appropriate shelter. Backed by better data systems and closer coordination among providers, we will move people rapidly to housing and services matched to their specific needs, improving the odds that homelessness won’t recur and that it is brief and one-time.

CHRONIC AND YOUTH HOMELESSNESS. We will continue to help people who have slipped into chronic homelessness, drawing on the extensive network of housing and supportive services we and partners have established over the last decade. We will also continue our emphasis on youth homelessness, with a special focus on preventing homelessness among former foster youth.

GAUGING SUCCESS. Three community-level metrics will show our progress. Moving these metrics will require the coordinated efforts of other players as well. By 2020 we will:

Reduce the number of unsheltered people in the annual One Night Count by

50%
(2015 = 3,772)



YEAR 1 UNITED WAY GOAL:
Help 2,373 formerly homeless people maintain their housing by providing supportive services.

95% of people who have experienced homelessness do not return within two years
(2015 = 85%)

Reduce the number of youth of color who are homeless by

10 percentage points
(2015 = 67%)

There is no moment of more acute vulnerability than when you lose your home. United Way will continue to work for an end to homelessness, building on the successes and learning from the shortcomings of past efforts.

With adjustments in our approach, significant progress against homelessness can occur, making it rare, brief and—if experienced—one-time.

HOW WE’II DO IT

Building the Brand

Key trends affecting our marketing and communications:

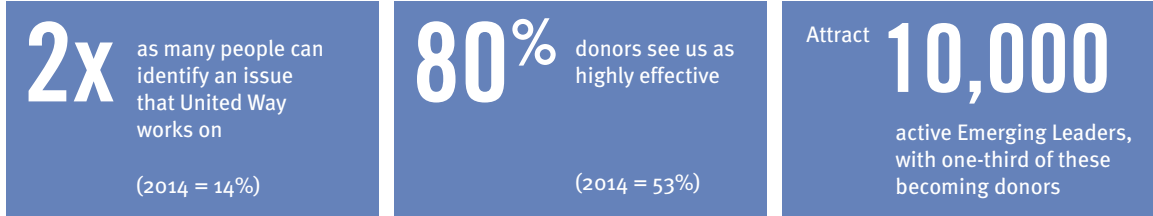
- Our message can be too complicated or get lost in a growing din of communications.
- While most people in the community know our name, outside of workplaces where our presence is strong, there’s often little clarity about what we do.
- Our supporter base has been aging, though recent efforts to draw young Emerging Leaders to our cause show strong promise.
- Online—and especially social media—is now a principal way people across generations learn about and join social causes.

2015-2020 strategy:

- Develop messaging and events that explain with new clarity and immediacy why United Way matters and merits support.
- Engage donors and volunteers beyond the workplace through more intensive and effective use of social media and other online channels. Increase presence in the media through events and partnerships with businesses and nonprofits.
- Draw large numbers of Emerging Leaders into an active connection including volunteering, coming to events, engaging with us on social media, and giving.

GAUGING SUCCESS. Success in our outreach over the next five years can be gauged on three major metrics:

- **Twice as many people can identify an issue that United Way works on** (biennial Brand Equity survey, general public, from 14% to 28%).
- **Donors see us as highly effective** compared to other nonprofits (biennial Brand Equity survey, donors, from 53% to 80%).
- **Attract 10,000 active Emerging Leaders**, with one-third of these becoming donors.



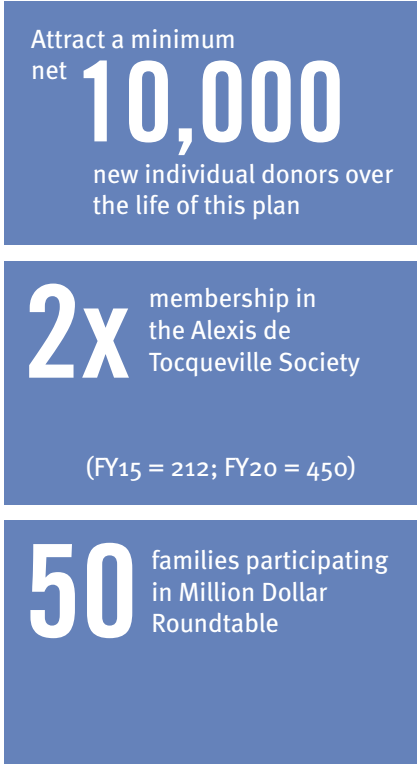
Financial Resources

Key trends affecting our fundraising:

- Increased competition in the workplace, where our access once set us apart.
- Donors increasingly like to target their giving to specific programs, as opposed to making an unrestricted gift.
- Our major donor revenue is up, even as our workplace support has slipped. Overall our donor base is graying.
- We are having increasing success raising money from corporate sponsorships, grants and government funding.
- Our low operating expenses—partly thanks to our Gates Endowment—factor favorably into many donors’ support.

2015-2020 strategy:

- Make our connection with donors a relationship, not a transaction. Give special attention to new donors and loyal donors.
- Broaden beyond workplaces, meeting people where they live, socialize and play.
- Embrace the trend toward donors’ earmarking giving for particular programs, and present compelling opportunities to do so. This will include a new multimillion-dollar fundraising campaign with a likely focus on helping youth who have dropped out of high school finish their education and get on track to a career.
- Build on the strengths in the major donor program, attracting new contributors and securing large investments, including planned gifts.
- Do more to draw in resources from government funders, foundation grants, corporate grants and sponsorships. Give particular attention to new and rising companies, especially in tech.
- Explore a large-scale new event with fundraising focus.



GAUGING SUCCESS. Ultimately we want to see the growth in community wealth more fully expressed in our bottom line. Specifically over the next five years we seek to:

- Grow annual fundraising incrementally from a projected \$38 million in FY 15 to **\$48 million in FY 20.**
- Have one “**breakthrough**” year in which, on the strength of a specially targeted campaign, we raise an additional **\$10 million.**

People

Key trends affecting our human resources:

- As the economy heats back up, competition for talent is intensifying. Our ability to attract people could be constrained by what we can pay.
- The skillsets needed in our employees are ever-evolving, especially in regard to technology.
- Volunteers continue to make major contributions of time and talent to us.
- Companies, running ever leaner, increasingly can’t give people or money for our Loaned Executive (seasonal fundraiser) program.

2015-2020 strategy:

- Foster a culture that is mission-based, inclusive, high-performing and flexible. As part of this, continuously invest in meaningful professional development at all levels.
- Continuously calibrate compensation to stay competitive with others in the nonprofit space.
- Maximize our use of AmeriCorps and VISTA volunteers, both to advance our mission and provide meaningful work experience for community-minded young adults.
- Continue to amplify our impact by engaging the time and expertise of volunteers as board members; advisors on grantmaking, fundraising, marketing and technology; and on-the-ground doers.

Technology and Systems

Key trends affecting our technology and systems:

- Disparate systems are not well integrated and provide a fragmented view of our constituents.
- The applications we use are largely for desktop use, while our workforce is increasingly mobile.
- Computer security breaches in the wider world are increasingly frequent, public and costly.

2015-2020 strategy:

- Unify systems so that it becomes easy to gather and utilize relevant info about constituents.
- Implement technologies that ensure agility, mobility and scalability.
- Identify, evaluate and mitigate IT security risks.

Seeing 2020

Seattle and King County have some of the most civically engaged people anywhere. United Way of King County provides a way for them to come together around difficult community issues and make undeniable progress.

This plan reflects our best thinking about how, together, we can move forward over the next half-decade. We are excited by the vision and even more excited at the depth of commitment that this planning process made evident. Even if social and economic conditions go in markedly different directions than seen here—clearly possible—our community’s belief in United Way as a vital means to take care of each other gives us confidence that we will meet the challenge.

To the literally hundreds of people involved in the creation of this document, our heartfelt thanks.



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