UNITED WAY
Greater Triangle

2026 Request for Proposals

Economic Mobility Investment Portfolio

Durham · Johnston · Orange · Wake

Context

Statewide, 41% of North Carolina households were below the ALICE Threshold in 2024 — earning above the Federal Poverty Level but not enough to cover housing, childcare, food, transportation, and healthcare (United For ALICE / United Way of North Carolina). Across the four counties of the Greater Triangle, thousands of families are navigating a system that generates real economic growth without producing real economic security for the people doing its essential work.

In the Triangle specifically, the distance between residents who were born here and those who arrived from out of state has widened dramatically: the income gap between Triangle natives and out-of-state-born residents grew from approximately $14,000 in 2014 to $24,000 in 2023. The region is growing — but that growth is not widely shared.

United Way of the Greater Triangle (UWGT) exists to address this challenge. We are the regional connector for economic mobility across Wake, Durham, Orange, and Johnston Counties — working in the seams between communities and institutions to improve the economic mobility for all residents. We identify opportunities to improve mobility and align institutions to implement systemic solutions that could not be implemented alone.

This Request for Proposals opens an additional competitive investment across three focus areas — Workforce Training, Benefits Access & Wraparound Supports, and Youth Development.

Our Approach: Convene · Invest · Amplify

UWGT's model is built around identifying high impact opportunities to improve economic mobility and then applying our three core functions to activate communities and institutions to seize on those opportunities. Our core functions include:

CONVENE	INVEST	AMPLIFY
We bring corporate partners, community leaders, and regional experts to the table to surface opportunities and align on the way forward.	We align the people, partnerships, dollars, and time needed to make economic mobility a reality across the Triangle.	We learn from every investment and amplify the solutions that move people forward, so good work compounds over time.

Why These Investments

Every dollar UWGT deploys carries a commitment: a minimum three-dollar return in economic value to the residents of the Greater Triangle who are working hardest and gaining the least ground. That standard is not aspirational language — it is a discipline that shapes which opportunities we pursue and which we decline. The three focus areas in this RFP were chosen because they represent the clearest, most defensible pathways to meeting that threshold. Each reflects a point in the economic mobility continuum where the evidence is strong, the regional need is acute, and where UWGT's role as a convener and anchor funder can unlock scale that no single organization could achieve alone.

The three focus areas in this RFP emerged from existing partnerships with employers, nonprofits, and public systems; a working knowledge of where local capacity exists and where it needs to be strengthened; and a view of where residents are losing ground and why. UWGT combined this with the best available national evidence, anchored by the Results for America's Economic Mobility Catalog — one of the most rigorous, publicly available inventories of evidence-based programs and strategies in the field. Neither lens is sufficient alone — regional knowledge without evidence risks repeating what's familiar; evidence without local context risks funding what works somewhere else. Holding both is how UWGT intends to invest as responsibly and impactfully as possible.

The 2026 Investment Portfolio

In the coming year, UWGT will invest over one million dollars in the Triangle to support economic mobility in the Triangle, deployed across six components. Three components totaling $575,000 are already committed, awarded, or actively underway. Through this competitive RFP, UWGT is expanding its portfolio across three focus areas. Awards are one-year grants for FY27, with 50% of awarded funds distributed in January 2027 and the remaining 50% in July 2027.

Already Committed & Active — $575,000

Investment Component	Total Investment	Status	Primary Function
10 to Watch *Non-profit Capacity Building*	**$250,000**	*Committed*	Co-investment and capacity building for 10 high-potential. emerging nonprofits.
Power Hours *Non-profit Capacity Building*	**$75,000**	*Active*	Monthly nonprofit leadership workshop series building organizational capacity across the region, sponsored by Duke Energy.
Pathway Navigators *Workforce Navigation*	**$250,000**	*Committed*	Activating 10 community-based organizations to connect residents with pathways to quality employment.

Open RFP — Competitive Investment

Investment Component	Grant Sizes	Status	Primary Function
The Triangle Advancement Portfolio (TAP) *Workforce Training*	**$10,000–$75,000**	*Open RFP*	Investing in workforce training programs delivering economic mobility to Triangle residents. Our goal is to create a portfolio of workforce training programs with comparable outcome measures that UWGT and philanthropic, corporate, and public funders use to direct their investments and align application and reporting requirements. UWGT will make direct grants to programs with demonstrated outcomes, provide technical assistance to programs seeking to improve their measurement capacity, and invest in seeding programs in high-demand fields with limited supply.
Benefits Access & Wraparound Supports	**$10,000–$75,000**	*Open RFP*	Increasing access to the full spectrum of public benefits and wraparound supports that create the stability needed for stability and advancement. Includes benefits navigation (SNAP, Medicaid, CHIP, LIHEAP, WIC, childcare subsidies), SNAP and Medicaid continuity for residents at administrative disenrollment risk, financial counseling and benefits cliff guidance, housing stability supports and transportation access.
Youth Development	**$10,000–$75,000**	*Open RFP*	Early childhood education (ages 0–5) using structured, evidence-based curricula that track school-readiness outcomes and engage families; and programming for opportunity youth (ages 14–24) that combines career exploration, skill-building, and academic re-engagement with a concrete

Investment Component	Grant Sizes	Status	Primary Function
			pathway to a credential or job. A two-generation design — child in quality early care while a parent advances economically — is not required but is encouraged where it is feasible.

Investment Theses

The Triangle Advancement Portfolio (TAP): The Triangle Advancement Portfolio (TAP) is UWGT's workforce investment program — and it works differently than a typical grant. Most funders ask each program they support to report outcomes in their own way, requiring programs to meet many different data requirements and making it nearly impossible to know whether a dollar spent on workforce training here produces the same result as a dollar spent somewhere else. TAP seeks to address that challenge by establishing a shared measurement framework.

For programs that receive TAP funding, this means two things. First, you'll be asked to report within that shared framework. We recognize that programs have different levels of measurement capacity and will also invest in building your measurement capacity if needed. Second, you become part of something larger than your individual grant, you'll also be featured as a part of TAP's annual investor convening, where public and private funders gather to learn from the portfolio and align their next investments accordingly.

TAP funds the full range of program maturity — direct grants to programs with a demonstrated track record, technical assistance for programs that are building toward it, and seed investment in sectors where the region has unmet demand but limited supply. If you're a workforce training program committed to measuring your impact and connecting your work to the broader regional economy, TAP was designed with you in mind.

Benefits Access & Wraparound Supports: Every year, billions in federal benefits go unclaimed — not because people aren't eligible, but because the systems designed to deliver those benefits are difficult to navigate, prone to administrative error, and poorly connected to one another. Research shows that closing that gap directly enables economic advancement: reducing household financial stress, eliminating benefits cliffs that penalize earnings growth, and freeing up the cognitive bandwidth that economic insecurity consumes.

UWGT invests in two related but distinct types of interventions. The first is benefits access — connecting residents to the public supports they have earned, including SNAP and Medicaid enrollment, LIHEAP and utility assistance, WIC, childcare subsidies, and Medicaid continuity for residents at risk of administrative disenrollment despite remaining eligible.

The second is wraparound supports — interventions that address the structural instabilities that prevent people from advancing even when income is present, including financial coaching and savings programs, emergency financial assistance, housing stability supports, transportation access, and benefits cliff counseling that helps workers understand how earnings growth affects their eligibility and plan accordingly. Strong applications may focus on either area — or both. What matters is that the intervention is targeted, the population is specific, and the outcomes are measurable.

Youth Development (Early Childhood & Opportunity Youth):

UWGT's investment in youth development reflects a belief that economic mobility requires addressing both ends of the age continuum — supporting children in quality early care while creating pathways for young adults to advance economically. Applications don't have to address both populations to be competitive, but connections across the continuum are welcome where they exist naturally.

Within this area, UWGT funds two distinct types of work. The first is early childhood education for children ages 0–5: programs that use a structured, evidence-based curriculum, track school-readiness outcomes, and engage families — not just children — in the learning process. The second is programming for opportunity youth ages 14–24 who are disconnected from school and work: interventions that combine career exploration, skill-building, and academic re-engagement with a concrete pathway to a credential or job, and that stay with participants long enough to make a difference.

Who Should Apply

UWGT is inviting applications from nonprofit organizations and collaborative partnerships operating in Wake, Durham, Orange, and/or Johnston Counties. Across all components, we are looking for organizations that:

- Are working directly on economic mobility for Triangle residents — advancing their ability to earn more, keep more of what they earn, or build lasting assets
- Are rooted in and accountable to the communities they serve, with those closest to the challenge centered in the design and delivery of their work
- Defined a precise problem or opportunity using evidence that they seek to – and can reasonably – address that will unlock 3x in economic gains for their residents per dollar invested.
- Already have or demonstrate a commitment to demonstrating outcomes — not just activity — with data that is specific, honest about methodology, and disaggregated by race, income, and geography where available.
- Are willing to engage as active partners in UWGT's coordinating work — sharing data, contributing to shared problem definitions, and connecting their work to the broader portfolio

Eligibility Requirements

All applicants must meet the following baseline requirements to be considered for funding:

- 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, or a fiscal sponsor with 501(c)(3) status
- Operating in at least one of the four UWGT counties: Durham, Johnston, Orange, or Wake
- Organizational budget of at least $75,000 in the most recently completed fiscal year
- Board of Directors that meets at least quarterly
- Current fiscal year budget does not have a deficit exceeding 15% of total revenue
- Demonstrated capacity to – or a demonstrated commitment to developing the capacity to - track and report on program outcomes
- Not currently under a corrective action plan from any government or philanthropic funder

Collaborative applications are welcome and encouraged. In collaborative applications, one organization must serve as the fiscal agent and primary applicant. All partner organizations must independently meet eligibility requirements. Note: Collaborative applications are not accepted for the Triangle Advancement Portfolio (TAP) component.

How Applications Are Evaluated

The following criteria guide how UWGT evaluates applications. **Potential Impact, Evidence & Innovation, Feasibility & Organizational Capacity, and Resident Reach carry the most weight in our review.** TAP applicants are evaluated primarily on their fundamentals: alignment with regional labor market demand, evidence-based program design, potential return on investment for participants, and evidence of impact using the shared TAP measurement framework.

Criterion	What We're Looking For
Potential Impact ★	The work has a credible, specific theory of change linking activities to meaningful economic outcomes for Triangle residents — and the scale of potential impact justifies the investment. Our benchmark is a minimum three-dollar return in economic value to residents for every dollar invested.
Evidence & Innovation ★	The organization can point to evidence that its approach works — through rigorous research, its own outcome data, or both. We also welcome applications from organizations testing genuinely new approaches where the theory of change is compelling and there is a demonstrated commitment to measuring outcomes.
Rootedness & Reach ★	The organization has direct relationships with the residents it serves, and those closest to the challenge are centered in the design and delivery of solutions. We prioritize work that reaches residents who are most economically insecure and least well-served by existing systems.
Feasibility & Organizational Capacity ★	The proposed work is achievable within the grant period and budget requested. The organization has a track record of executing comparable work — and the financial stability, staffing, and infrastructure to implement what is proposed and report on outcomes with integrity.
Systems Change & Scale Potential	The work has the potential to change how systems operate — not just how individuals experience them. Priority goes to approaches that could serve as proof points for scaling an intervention more broadly — shifting policies, practices, or resource flows in ways that outlast the grant and benefit people who were never directly served by the program.
Sustainability	There is a credible path for the work to grow beyond the grant period — whether through earned revenue, public funding, employer co-investment, or replication by other actors.
Cross-Sector Collaboration	The work actively builds alignment between actors — employers, government agencies, nonprofits, communities — who do not typically operate in concert.

RFP Timeline

July 31st, 2026	RFP announced. Investment framework and component overviews published publicly.
August 6th, 2026	Full RFP and individual component applications released at noon. Weekly office hours available on Fridays from 10-11am throughout the application period, beginning on August 21st Via Zoom https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89106599141
October 1st, 2026	Applications due.
October–November 2026	Application review period.
November 2026	Select group of TAP applicants presented to funders at annual TAP Investor Convening.
December 2026	Funding decisions announced. Applicants notified individually. Feedback available upon request.
January 2027	50% of awarded funds distributed. Grant agreements executed.

July 2027	Remaining 50% of awarded funds distributed. Grant year concludes December 31, 2027.

How to Apply

UWGT is releasing individual application documents for each RFP component and the application on Thursday, August 6th at 12pm. Applicants should review the component overview document and the corresponding application before beginning. Organizations may apply to more than one component but must submit a separate application for each.

The Triangle Advancement Portfolio (TAP) application will focus on gathering data aligned to TAP's shared measurement framework.

Applications must be submitted through Submittable at the link below, which will become active on Friday, August 7th at 12am. Weekly office hours available on Fridays from 10-11am throughout the application period, beginning on August 21st. Contact UWGT' at Programs@unitedwaytriangle.org with questions.

Application: https://unitedwayofthegreatertriangle.submittable.com/submit