



**United Way**  
Saskatoon & Area



# INVESTMENT STRATEGY

## 2025-2027

**Community Impact**

United Way Saskatoon & Area



## BACKGROUND

In March of 2025, all agreements with agency partners expired and were informed a new Investment Strategy was being developed. This document contains important information about our 2025-2027 *Community Investment Strategy* priorities, the process we implemented to develop the strategy, and the community members we consulted with to inform us about needs and trends.

## DATA: SETTING THE STAGE

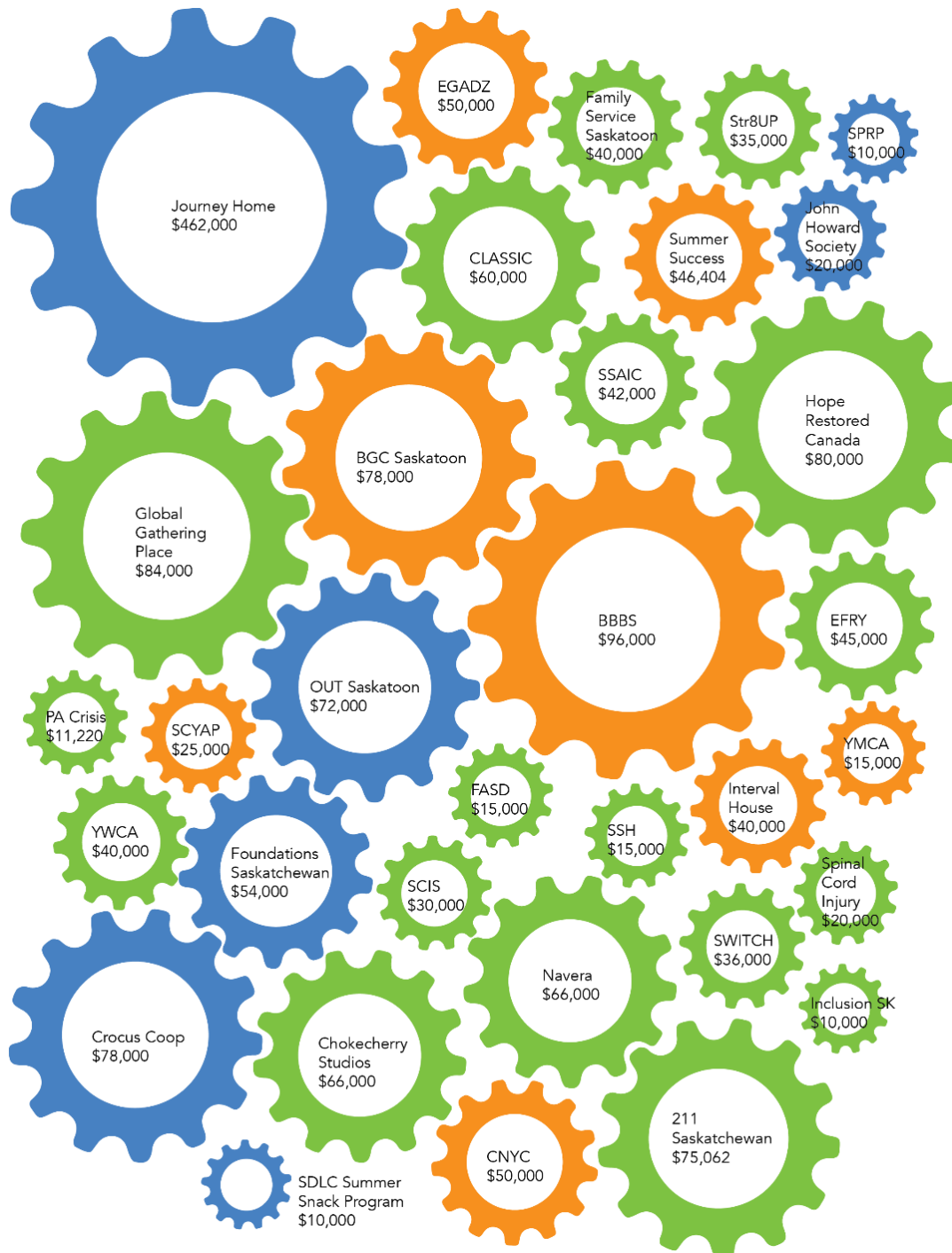
In the 2023/2024 investment year, UWSA invested \$1.146 million dollars in 12 community-based agencies - through our multi-year funding agreements. We invested an additional \$525,000 through our Collaborative Funders partnership.





This chart provides a strategic view of last year's investments:

(housing: green; community: blue; children: orange)





## UNPACKING THE 2020-2024 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

UWSA's 2020-2024 investment strategy was developed through processes that included consulting with several community members, assessing community needs, and aligning that information with UWSA's priorities.

The priority themes established for the 2020-2024 Community Investment Strategy were the following:

- *Readiness for Kindergarten*
- *Mentoring for school success*
- *Community and recreational supports*
- *Creating connection to community, culture and roots*
- *Summer Success reading program*
- *Programs that support/assist children/youth to improve school attendance*
- *Enhance access to early years developmental supports*
- *Programs that connect children & youth to positive role models & that develop leadership skills*

## 2020-2024 SUMMARY

Several factors affected the implementation of the 2020-2024 Investment Strategy. The most significant changes came during the COVID 19 Pandemic. Many agencies pivoted from in-person service delivery to virtual programming, and many stopped delivering programs and services, entirely. UWSA also adjusted its service model and reporting requirements during the Pandemic. It was crucial that we served as a community catalyst to help agencies communicate and collaborate effectively during the lock-down. Food security and homelessness issues were prioritized due to the urgency and high community need.

UWSA was chosen by the Federal government to broker the Emergency Community Support Fund and the Community Service Response Funds. The brokering of those funds placed a significant amount of responsibility onto UWSA teams. Major accountabilities for the brokering of the Federal grants included the following:



**Covid 19 Senior's Response Fund:** \$84,000 distributed to three agencies in Saskatoon and one in Prince Albert.

**United Way Saskatoon and Area Local Love Fund:** a national initiative, each United Way raised funds to support local initiatives. UWSA partnered with SCF and allocated funds to agencies. The process was facilitated by the Inter-Agency Response Team. UWSA raised and distributed \$166,901.



**Emergency Community Support Fund:** UWSA allocated \$1.8M to 65 projects in 17 communities. Another application process to the same region, whereby an additional \$533,172 was allocated to 36 projects in 19.



**Bell Media and UWCC:** Bell media, through UWCC distributed thousands of phones and SIM cards for free use. UWSA distributed 250 cell phones and SIM cards to 18 organizations with a focus on youth.

**Bianco Liquidation:** in western Canada, provided United Ways with donations of masks, sanitizer, and other products. UWSA stored and distributed.

**Community Service Response Fund:** lead for application, adjudication, reporting processes. Allocated \$1.2M to 24 agencies in Saskatoon and Area. Allocated \$565K to 12 agencies in Northern Saskatchewan.







## LOOKING BACK AT 2020-2024: CONSULTATIONS THAT HELPED TO SHAPE THE STRATEGY

To develop the 2020-2024 Investment strategy, four (4) discreet large-table community consultations were held in 2019, all implemented by invite. Those consultations consisted of the following:



**A group consultation facilitated on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019, at the Travelodge Hotel:** this group consisted of corporate partners (Cameco, Federated Cooperatives, Concentra), Labour Council representatives, funded-agencies, community-based organizations (not funded by UWSA), U of S, GenNext and the Poverty Reduction Partnership.

**Station 20 West:** 14 people attended a morning consultation. Representatives included a retired UWSA staff member, funded and non-funded agencies and Federated Cooperatives.

**Learning Disabilities Association:** 18 people attended a half-day consultation. Representatives included a private practice psychologist, staff from the Community Foundation, Funded agencies and non-funded agencies, Saskatoon Housing Initiative Partnership, and Saskatoon Public Libraries.

**First Nations and Métis Elder, and Indigenous Youth Consultation:** this was held on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019, at Mount Royal High School and Bedford Road Collegiate. The participants were consulted about their service needs and emerging issues, and their overall knowledge of UWSA's mission and mandate.





## 2025-2027: INFORMING THE NEXT TWO YEARS



To inform the 2025-2027 Investment strategy, UWSA facilitated three (3) discreet, half-day consultations. Each consultation was themed based on our need to engage diverse voices and considerate of our partnerships. The primary goals for the consultations were:

- Ensuring UWSA funding criteria are in line with current community trends, issues and needs.
- Ensuring the consultation process included **diverse** voice, life experiences and perspectives.

We invited many of our partners – as informants - to give us feedback about our upcoming Investment Priorities. We asked:

- What do you believe are emerging trends and issues that will require support from UWSA in the future?
- How can UWSA better participate in key community conversations?
- Reflecting on our past Investment Strategy, how would you assess our success, and how would you assess places we can improve upon?



## The Groups

### Group 1: Agencies, Partners, Labour Partners, Corporate, Private Sector

UWSA supports many partnerships and collaborates with the public and private sectors. As such, we have a long tradition of including our partners in our consultations. We invited feedback, and many stakeholders provided us with crucial information about trends, issues and needs. Most participants had some previous experience with UWSA programs and partnerships. Attendees included:

- Agency partner representatives
- Non-funded agency partners
- City of Saskatoon
- Partners working in Provincial sectors



### Group 2: Diverse Voice

Community consultations are an effective way to hear the voices of those who want to influence policies or programs, or those who bring the organizational perspectives of their employer. This (a general participation invite) type of consultation can be an effective way to develop programs and shape policy. However, understanding trends and issues that affect *all* community members can be a challenge without taking a purposeful approach to recruiting community members who are often not part of mainstream community

consultations. We did this.

Attendees included:

- Representation from the Queer, Trans, and LGBTQTS+ communities
- Youth representation
- Disability advocates
- Seniors' services advocates







### **Group 3: Indigenous Representation, Indigenous Perspectives, Cultural Competence**

In Saskatchewan, Indigenous communities are diverse. They are represented by several language groups, nations, cultural practices and traditional backgrounds. Indigenous people are overrepresented in all deficit areas experienced within the province of Saskatchewan, including highest rates of people experiencing homelessness, highest incarceration rates, highest unemployment rates, highest poverty rates, and highest health morbidities. Arguably, the issues that face Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan are both unique, and immense when compared to the rest of the population.



A discreet consultation for Indigenous communities was held, including knowledge keepers, Elders, stakeholders and other community members. Some of the questions asked were:

- What can UWSA do to further engage Indigenous communities?
- How can UWSA support culture and language revitalization in our community?

#### **Who we consulted with:**

- First Nations community members
- Métis community members
- Allies





## THE EVENTS: WHAT WE HEARD

The groups were presented with a problem statement that highlighted data related to community issues and trends. Participants were asked to collaborate, identify root causes and to consider solutions. The outcomes from all three events were aggregated and the following themes were derived from the feedback provided by the participants:

<b>Investing in Youth and School Supports</b>	<p>Participants stated that it is highly concerning that youth in our community are experiencing such significant food insecurity, mental health crises, and housing insecurities. People discussed the importance of schools as support spaces and places where socialization occurs. Colonialism, racism and the lack of political accountability were identified as root causes. Stakeholders stated that historical and childhood traumas disrupt student learning and add complex mental health challenges for youth whose challenges are already exasperated by poverty.</p> <p>Informants provided several solutions with key recommendations below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add substantial support to school-based student services, including external support services.</li><li>• Increase supports for programs that are already proven to be successful (i.e. My Homes)</li><li>• Prioritize preventative programs.</li><li>• Prioritize youth nutrition, in and out of schools.</li><li>• Locate services where children and youth are.</li><li>• Sexual health education must be a priority.</li><li>• Support mentorship.</li><li>• Significantly more access to counselling.</li></ul>
<b>Sexual Health, Sexual Violence &amp; Mental Health</b>	<p>Participants discussed the significant rates of <b>sexual violence</b>, <b>sexually transmitted infections</b> and <b>mental health challenges</b> facing our community. The informants stated that these issues are <b>gendered</b>, intersect and affect <i>all</i> people living in our community. Participants also stated that these issues disproportionately affect <b>people who are pushed to the margins</b>, such as <b>Queer</b> people, <b>racialized</b> citizens, <b>children and youth</b>, and <b>low-income</b> citizens. The participants recognized the <b>complexity</b> of the issues but believe these levels have reached <b>epidemic proportions</b> and that significant interventions are required.</p>

Youth  
Participation



	<p>The informants all stated that <b>non-profit agencies</b> can deliver important programming much more <b>affordably</b>, and with <b>better efficacy</b> – when compared to publicly funded organizations. Recommendations included but were not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significant work must be done to <b>educate young males and men</b> about <b>healthy sexuality</b> and respecting female bodies, and to <b>change their behaviours</b>, measurably.</li><li>• <b>Educate other professionals</b> – in all sectors – about the epidemic of STIs, STBBIs and sexual violence experienced by girls and women in our community.</li><li>• More support needs to be given to <b>prevention</b> programs.</li></ul>
<b>Homelessness &amp; Housing</b>	<p>The groups we consulted with were very informed about Saskatoon’s housing and homelessness crisis. Participants stated: “there is a clear relationship among poverty, colonialism, community traumas and homelessness.” Participants discussed past amendments to <b>how social assistance payments are paid to landlords</b> -as a mitigating factor to increasing homeless rates. <b>Racism</b> was discussed within this area and was a <b>common thread</b> in <i>all</i> areas. Homelessness was also discussed as an issue that <b>affects all diverse communities</b>. Informants also shared common ideas about the important role the <b>Provincial Government</b> needs to have in decreasing homelessness, and it was concerning to many that they are not taking a leadership role. Other recommendations were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support the <b>construction of “tiny homes”</b> as an affordable option.</li><li>• Create designated, safe <b>housing for vulnerable populations</b>.</li><li>• Support <b>“wrap-around”</b> type services so people can access <b>interdisciplinary</b> services where they live.</li><li>• Housing that <b>prioritizes children and families</b> is integral.</li><li>• Significant consideration must be given to how <b>seniors are affected by homelessness</b> and affordable housing shortages.</li></ul>
<b>2SLGBTQ+ Issues and Spaces</b>	<p>Informants acknowledged that Saskatoon has become a much <b>safer place to live for 2SLGBTQ+ citizens</b> and that many community spaces have become much safer and <b>more inclusive</b>. Participants expressed concern about the – higher than average – rates of <b>sexual violence affecting members of the Queer community</b>, and specifically <b>Trans humans</b> living in our community. Groups discussed the <b>“morality-based”</b> approach to policies and attitudes that affect people from the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and expressed concern that services are <b>not afforded to Queer folks at the same level</b> they are for other citizens. Of main concern were</p>

*“We cannot overlook the affect that addictions and self-medication have on Queer and Trans people.”*

-Rae



	<p>policies that restricted <b>access to public and institutional washrooms</b> for Trans community members.</p>
<b>Indigenous Community</b>	<p>Indigenous stakeholders and allies stated that they are very aware of the challenges facing the community, and that they are fundamentally aware of the racism that Indigenous people deal with every day. Many of the stakeholders stated: <i><b>“we have all had to deal with these challenges. Many of us grew up poor.”</b></i></p> <p>Stakeholders stressed that <b>Indigenous family systems are fragmented</b> and have been dismantled due to the implementation of <b>Indian Residential Schools</b> and foster care systems. <b>Apprehensions are more prevalent</b> today than they have ever been.</p> <p><i>“There are very few spaces and places where Indigenous spiritual and cultural practices are supported. There is a significant mentorship void, and young people need unconditional supports.” - Vern</i></p> <p>Participants recommended the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children and families need significant <b>access to counselling</b> support.</li><li>• Youth require <b>mentorship</b> from community members and agencies.</li><li>• <b>School preparedness</b> and nutrition need to be better prioritized by the entire community, not just schools.</li><li>• <b>Outside supports need to be placed in schools</b>, and where youth are.</li><li>• Investments in <b>Indigenous-led projects</b>, support for <b>gender-diverse</b> people, and <b>anything prevention-related</b>.</li></ul>
<b>Our Aging Community and Seniors</b>	<p>Participants raised the importance of paying attention to our rapidly <b>aging community</b>. They discussed how our aging population means there will be increased demands for <b>seniors’ services</b> in the very near future. Feedback also discussed a need to consider the <b>rights of seniors</b>.</p> <p>Stakeholders acknowledged the increasing issues that seniors face, such as <b>isolation</b>, depression, anxiety, <b>food insecurity</b>, homelessness, and <b>accessibility</b> issues. Stakeholders highlighted the following priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support programs that allow seniors to have more <b>accessibility</b> within the community.</li><li>• Invest in programs that support <b>seniors’ mental health</b> and wellness.</li></ul>





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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support programs that invest in <b>racialized</b> seniors, <b>Queer</b> seniors, and <b>low SES</b> seniors.</li></ul> |
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## APPLICATION AND REPORTING PROCESSES

### Who shall help to inform the application process, and how will we create it?

To develop *this* investment strategy, we have revisited our past application and reporting processes. We wanted to ensure that these processes are still relevant and user friendly for our agencies.

We consulted with a small group of agency partner Executive Directors (E.D.s)/Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) to assist us with reviewing our past application process, and to provide us with feedback on developing a revised application and reporting process. Some things we considered were:

### Application Content

- Which program outcomes are important to community and donors?
- Are we funding specific programs? Are we funding operations? What are the deliverables we ask our agencies to provide evidence of?
- Do agencies require support *during* the application process?
- Application categories
- How do funding applications intersect with the strategic directions of UWSA (Poverty to Possibility, etc.).

### Application Platform

Many agencies have expressed concern that funding application processes have become increasingly time-consuming and that the processes consume too many staff resources.

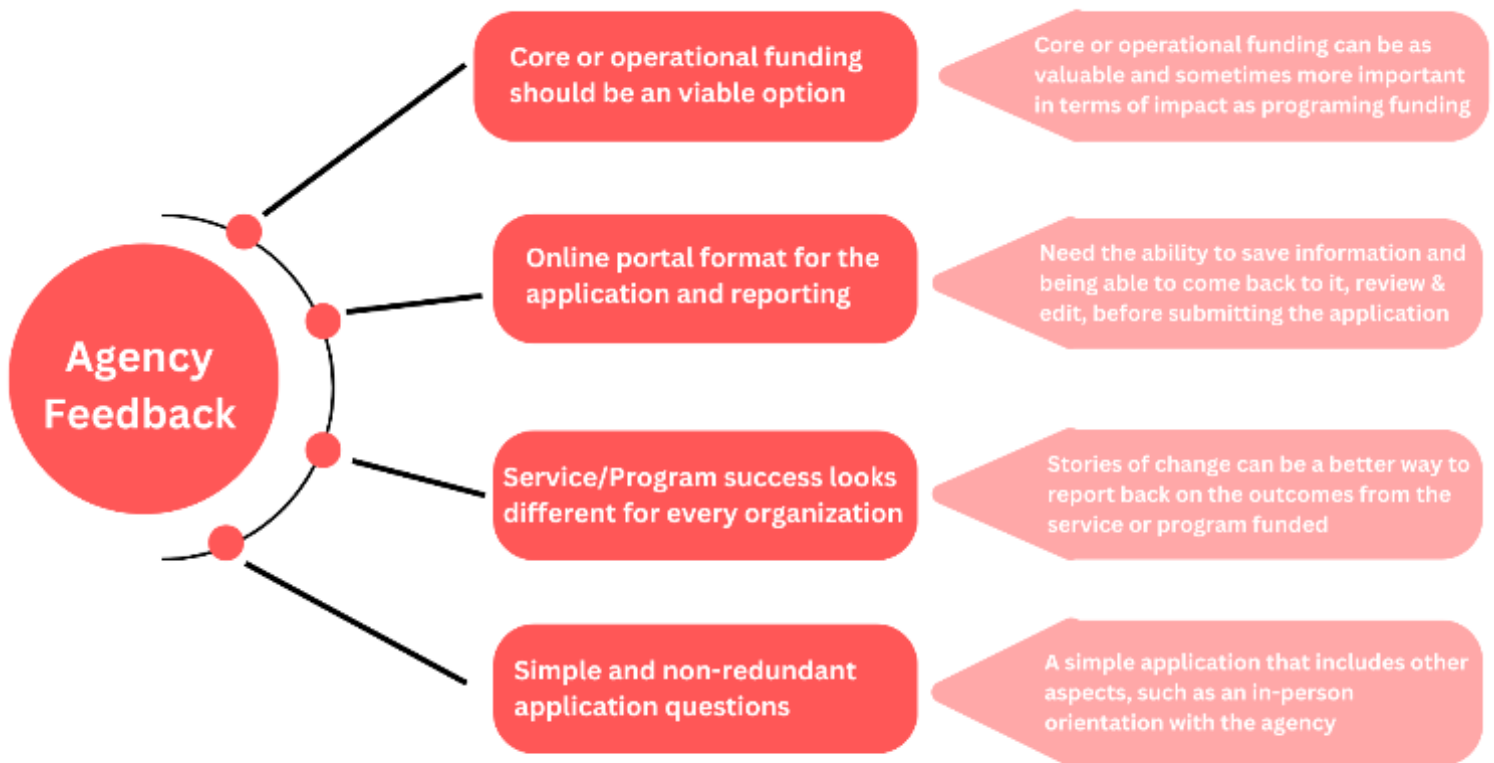
An easy-to-use digital platform considers:

- The user experience.
- The medium: electronic, on-line, paper, survey monkey?
- The reporting process platform.
- The use of a rating and program evaluation rubric.



### Agency feedback

Agency leaders provided us with important feedback about our application and reporting processes. Their feedback included, but was not limited to:





## TIMELINES: NOW TO ALLOCATION

