

## Veterans Services

### Request for Proposal

United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region (UWDOR) issues this Request for Proposal as a part of our commitment to achieve the goal of improving the condition of our neighbors affected by poverty and limited resources. This is in partnership with the MISSION UNITED™ platform. UWDOR targets strategies that support the financial stability of our veterans and their families. We aim to improve outcomes for our veterans living in Dutchess and Orange counties by assisting them and their families along their path to financial stability.

The goals outlined in this RFP represent a multi-faceted plan developed in partnership with community leaders defining government, businesses, nonprofits, medical practitioners, educators, students, parents, and the larger community. Through this RFP process, UWDOR seeks partnerships with nonprofit organizations during the time period of **July 2024 to June 2025**. Our intention is to invest sufficient funding to achieve significant results.

- **For all veterans programs**, United Way has allotted funding in increments up to \$10,000 for these requests. Please indicate your request here (maximum of \$10,000). *If United Way selects your program, you may be eligible for additional funding next year. This is contingent on your organization remaining in good standing with regard to all United Way contract requirements. There is no guarantee of future additional funding.*

### Key Dates

Activity	Date
RFP Released	February 5th, 2024
Questions & Answers	Please submit questions to: <a href="mailto:ci-inbox@uwdor.org">ci-inbox@uwdor.org</a> Responses will be issued within 48 business hours
Technical Guidance “How to Apply”	Video/Written statement
Application Due Date	March 15th, 2024 by 5pm
Anticipated Award Notifications	June, 2024

### Core Funding Criteria

In partnership with our community, United Way utilizes a cohesive strategy to address the needs of children, families, and individuals with limited income in Dutchess and Orange counties. This RFP aims to establish a foundation for veterans’ overall stability. UWDOR is seeking to support partners who share our commitment to the following:

- A commitment to community level **outcomes** focused on geographic and demographic locations with the greatest need as defined by data;
- A commitment to cross-agency and cross-community **collaboration** in developing effective, cohesive strategies; and
- A commitment to strategies that demonstrate long-term success using **evidence-based or evidence-informed models**.

### Service Areas

Together with our partners, we will support veterans' services to ensure access to vital housing and legal assistance. Community-level indicators utilized to meet these needs include but are not limited to: the number of veterans receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Point in Time rates of homeless veterans per county, unemployment insurance rates, and/or total rate of employment of veterans.

Service Areas	Description	Community-Level Outcomes
Housing Assistance & Legal Assistance	Program staff and volunteers will increase access to affordable housing and legal services for veterans and their families.	Increased accessibility to affordable housing and legal support options for veterans.

### Collaboration

Strong collaboration among all partners is necessary for our community to realize outcomes that will demonstrate lasting and meaningful change for our region's veterans. Nonprofit partners are strongly encouraged to incorporate collaborative opportunities into their proposal.

**\*Programs that rely on outside organizations to accomplish stated goals are required to provide letters of commitment that demonstrate support from the outside organization.**

### Evidence-Based or Evidence-Informed Models

United Way is committed to changing our community in a positive and meaningful way. In order to do so, we seek to establish partnerships with evidence-based or evidence-informed programs (programs that have been proven successful in the past).

*From the Child Welfare Information Gateway:*

**Evidence-based practices** are approaches to prevention or treatment that some form of documented scientific evidence validates. This includes findings established through controlled clinical studies, but other methods of establishing evidence are also valid.

**Evidence-based programs** use a defined curriculum or set of services that, when implemented with fidelity as a whole, has been validated by some form of scientific evidence.

**Evidence-informed practices** use the best available research and practice knowledge to guide program design and implementation. This informed practice allows for innovation while

incorporating the lessons learned from the existing research literature.<sup>1</sup> For your convenience, these models as indicated below.

### **Application Evaluation Scoring Rubric**

United Way evaluates applications based upon the following criteria:

- Program Design (50 Points)
  - Application should demonstrate the ability to achieve identified community-level outcomes;
  - Application should demonstrate evidence of active collaboration;
  - Application should demonstrate identification and implementation of evidence based/informed models.
- Justification of Need (20 Points) – Application should demonstrate - through data - the need for this program and value added to our community.
- Organizational Infrastructure (30 Points) – Application must demonstrate that the organization has the capacity to implement program design and collaboration.

**Note:** United Way gives funding priority to year round programs over seasonal programs.

### **Our Community's Challenge**

Dutchess and Orange counties are home to nearly 40,000 veterans, many of whom lack access to vital services. According to United Way Worldwide, veterans are much more likely to experience homelessness. They make up 13% of the overall homeless population, a statistic that is disproportionate to their overall national population<sup>2</sup>. Veterans also encounter poverty rates at an average of 4% in Dutchess<sup>3</sup> and Orange<sup>4</sup> counties, with rates as high as 10% in the city centers. Individuals living below the poverty line have an increased chance of facing serious health and mental health issues, including depression.<sup>5</sup> Sadly, Veterans are not exempt from this trend; in 2019, about 17 veterans committed suicide per day.<sup>6</sup>

UWDOR is committed to reversing these trends in Dutchess and Orange counties. With increased access to legal services and housing, we will increase the overall financial stability for veterans, whether they have recently returned from deployment or call the Hudson Valley their

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<sup>1</sup> “Evidence Based Practice Definitions and Glossaries.” Child Welfare Information Gateway. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/practice-improvement/evidence/ebp/definitions/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nchv.org/veteran-homelessness/>

<sup>3</sup> “Veterans in Poverty.” Orange County Profile: Financial Stability. Mid-Hudson Valley Community Profiles. <http://www.mhvcommunityprofiles.org/dutchess-county/financial-stability/financial-resources/veterans-poverty/charts>

<sup>4</sup> “Veterans in Poverty.” Orange County Profile: Financial Stability. Mid-Hudson Valley Community Profiles. <http://www.mhvcommunityprofiles.org/orange-county/financial-stability/financial-resources/veterans-poverty/charts>

<sup>5</sup> “Mental Health and Poverty.” McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research. New York University. 2022. [http://mcsilver.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/reports/Mental\\_Health\\_and\\_Poverty\\_one-sheet.pdf](http://mcsilver.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/reports/Mental_Health_and_Poverty_one-sheet.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> “Suicide Among Veterans and Other Americans.” U.S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs. September 2022. <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/2016suicidedatareport.pdf>

home. With additional access to services, veterans will have the opportunity to leverage litigation in order to access benefits and basic services. With further access to housing options, homelessness among veterans will decline.

We recognize that several programs devoted to veterans' needs exist right here in our community. Our goal is to create a continuum of services for veterans' reintegration into civilian life and beyond. UWDOR will provide funding to programs in order to best serve the veterans population and partner with the 2-1-1 helpline, which will connect veterans in need directly to the services available.

### **Our Community's Opportunity**

Coordinated service delivery will offer veterans access to basic services that put them on the path to greater stability and, ultimately, sustainability. They may call the 2-1-1 number directly to be referred to programs that serve the veterans population in their locale. By obtaining housing and seeking legal assistance to receive basic services that they may have been previously denied, veterans will be able to overcome obstacles and move towards a pathway to financial stability.

### **Housing Assistance**

Homelessness is prevalent in our region, with rates higher in Dutchess and Orange counties than the rest of New York State (excluding New York City) and veterans are not immune. Dutchess and Orange County residents spend 32% and 35% of their income on housing expenses. In some areas, residents spend over 64% of their income on sustaining housing. Spending over 30% is considered rent-burdened, and spending significantly above that threshold is considered severely rent-burdened.<sup>7</sup> It is evident that local residents face obstacles with this clear lack of affordable housing. In fact, access to housing benefits overall well-being. Those without access to permanent housing face mental illness at nearly double the rate of those in the general population and are in poorer physical health.<sup>8</sup>

### **Legal Assistance**

Due to the risk that veterans take on when taking part in active duty, many come home with physical disabilities. In fact, according to the Benchmark Institute, their chances of facing a disability are nearly twice the rate of the general population, and as a result, disability claims are increasing nationally. Veterans living with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty, as accessing employment becomes more challenging. In certain instances, veterans rely exclusively on Social Security Disability or Supplemental Security Income, meaning their overall income averages \$10,968/year, which is only 75% of the federal poverty line.

In the instance that a veteran is denied basic benefits that relate to their health, housing or other noncriminal legal issues, they may need access to free/low-cost legal representation. Only 50% of veterans were aware that they were eligible benefits after military service. Therefore, it is crucial that veterans have access to legal professionals who can educate them on resources that may be available to them and bring litigation on their behalf if necessary.

<sup>7</sup> Housing. (n.d.). Retrieved December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, from <http://www.mhvcommunityprofiles.org/dutchess-county/housing>

<sup>8</sup> Health and Homelessness. National Alliance to End Homelessness. Retrieved December 28<sup>th</sup> 2023, from <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/health/>

<sup>9</sup> Federal Poverty Level Guidelines and Chart. (Amadeo, K.). Retrieved December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 from <https://www.thebalance.com/federal-poverty-level-definition-guidelines-chart-3305843>

### **COVID-19 Impact**

Veterans have been disproportionately impacted by the community effects of COVID, a population already susceptible to PTSD/depression and other mental health related challenges. For veterans who rely on program such as Social Security Disability or Supplemental Security Income, the necessity of having access to affordable legal counsel remains of the utmost importance. Lack of legal service access is a consistent barrier to financial stability and for a group that relies on counsel to procure VA benefits and access to other specific programs, UWDOR remains dedicated to committing resources to sustain that critical access.

The housing crisis has left no community unscathed, including the Hudson Valley; access to safe and affordable housing remains urgent.<sup>9</sup> Without safe and secure housing and financial stability, economic well-being remain elusive. As a result, UWDOR commits to partnering with service providers that will supply veteran/military family households with resources to remain in their home.

### **Selection Process**

All applications will be reviewed by members of the United Way Community Impact Committee and supporting Councils. Additionally, community leaders have been invited to serve as evaluators to ensure a diverse representation of our community serves to further this crucial process. Applications will be scored based on the set criteria (see page 3). The Community Impact Committee reserves the right to take previous granting history into consideration and to request additional information during this process.

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<sup>9</sup> “Report: More Than 40% of US Renter Households are at Risk of Evictions. McCarthy, N. (July, 2020). Forbes, Retrieved 1/28/21