

Meeting our Community's Greatest Challenges, Head-On



Giving Kids a Strong Start

Community Need (Pre-COVID)

62% of all children are reading proficiently by the end of the 3rd grade - but just 41% for economically disadvantaged children

Children not reading proficiently by the end of the 3rd grade are 4X less likely to graduate from high school

11% of all children live in poverty, while 44% of Black/African American children do so

27% of students in Portland, South Portland and Westbrook experience the instability of moving in and out of school (more than 3x state average)

COVID Impacts

Experts predict 5 to 12 months learning loss by June

Learning opportunities for children 2-4 years old were interrupted by childcare closures and restrictions (on top of a 30% decline in center-based care from 2011-2018)

Environmental stressors increased for parents, impacting stress for children (which impacts learning and long-term health outcomes)

Community Solutions

Adopt-a-School

Student Stability Alliance

Childcare Entrepreneurship Initiative

Trauma-Informed Community Initiative

Racial Equity Fund

Data Warehouse

Empowering Neighbors to Thrive, Not Just Survive

Community Need (Pre-COVID)

30% of all households don't have enough in savings to live for 3 months at the federal poverty level without income - this is 60% for people of color, and 74% for Black/African American families

66% of renter households are unable to afford a 2-bedroom rental

57% of employers in a Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce survey indicated the lack of affordable quality childcare impacted their ability to recruit and hire

COVID Impacts

Unemployment exploded from 2.6% to 11.3%, and though recovering left a significant financial impact

Those earning among the lowest wages pre-pandemic (retail/hospitality) were hit hardest by unemployment, without a safety net of savings

Many are unable to return to work because of unmet childcare needs

Family food insecurity is estimated at 21% (up from 17% pre-pandemic)

Community Solutions

Greater Portland Workforce Initiative

CA\$H – Creating Assets, Savings & Hope

ALICE – Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed

Childcare Entrepreneurship Initiative

Racial Equity Fund

Data Warehouse

Helping Everyone Live Longer, Better Lives

Community Need (Pre-COVID)

Children who experience four or more ACEs are at significantly greater risk for negative behavioral, physical and mental health experiences later in life

18% of high school students have experienced four or more ACEs

22% of middle school students reported experiencing depression, while 18% reported experiencing suicidal ideation

Black/African American individuals are more likely to die prematurely than their white peers

COVID Impacts

Isolation, separation from support systems, increased stressors tied to family unemployment, food insecurity, lack of childcare, and racial inequities collectively increased the risk for ACEs and mental health needs

Adults reporting anxiety and/or depressive disorder are up from 11% in 2019 to 44% in 2021 nationally

In Maine, there was a 25% increase in substance use deaths from 2019 to 2020

Community Solutions

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training

Trauma-Informed Community Initiative

Racial Equity Fund

Data Warehouse

Ways YOU Can Partner in the Solutions

Benefits to Partnering: Our aim is to provide value for your support in addition to the impact you will have in the community. Benefits of partnering include community recognition, public relations support, employee volunteerism opportunities, and the possibility of tailoring specific aspects of the program design itself. We are happy to work with you in customizing your experience in these areas to best meet your individual corporate or CSR needs.

Initiatives support focus areas of: ACEs, Basic Needs, DEI, Education, Financial Stability, Mental Health, and Workforce. Employee Volunteerism Opportunities (EVOs) listed for each initiative are examples and can be developed together.

01 | Adopt-a-School:

Focus Area: Education, DEI

UWSM will bring you and a local elementary school together in partnership, where your contribution of financial resources and time are focused directly on the identified needs of that student body. You and your school will utilize a robust toolkit developed and piloted by UWSM through funding and volunteer support of Dead River and Baker Newman Noyes. We provide training in using the toolkit, gather outcome data, and convene participants to share learnings.

EVOs: Create back-to-school or literacy kits | Become a reading partner, virtual pen-pal, or Rise & Shine mentor

02 | Student Stability Alliance:

Focus Area: Education, DEI, Financial Stability

Mobile students, moving between schools and school districts as their families seek affordable housing and work, have little of the stability needed at home or school to support academic achievement. They show lower reading and math proficiency and are more likely to be ELL students and students of color. UWSM, partnering with three school districts, is targeting academic supports as well as root causes impacting housing, employment, and family stability.

EVOs: School family night volunteers | Create snack bags for classrooms | Book distribution & “read with me” events

03 | Childcare Entrepreneurship Initiative:

Focus Area: Workforce, Education

Affordable, accessible, and quality childcare is essential for today’s economy. Parents and employers alike need more childcare options and more childcare professionals to provide them. UWSM and a coalition of partners are launching an initiative to train and invest in childcare professionals and entrepreneurs for opening new childcare facilities in Cumberland County; providing critical skill-building in small business ownership and quality childcare operations, navigation support to minimize barriers, and strategic use of start-up cost investments.

EVOs: Become a small business owner mentor | Lead a small business workshop

04 | Greater Portland Workforce Initiative:

Focus Area: Workforce

GPWI creates the pathway for those looking to achieve self-sufficiency through meaningful employment – relying on access to education, an employer pipeline, and supportive services, each designed for underserved target populations who face obstacles to steady employment. UWSM provides backbone leadership for this collective impact initiative of 21 cross-sector stakeholders.

EVOs: Become a resume reviewer | Support mock-interview events



“ The power of partnership is so important and everyone can make a difference. One hour, one dollar...the more people we can engage, the better community we are going to be. ”

Deanna Sherman, Dead River Company



CA\$H – Creating Assets, Savings & Hope:

CA\$H provides a variety of financial education and asset building opportunities for low- to moderate-income participants during free income tax preparation services – supporting them to meet their individual financial needs and goals. Support includes, but is not limited to, providing assistance with budgeting, savings, reducing debt, matched savings programs, and connecting participants to community resources such as fuel assistance and food pantries. UWSM is expanding CA\$H to offer financial education and asset building beyond tax season and throughout the year.

EVOs: Become an Opportunity Guide or Tax Preparer volunteer | Lead a financial education workshop

ALICE – Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed:

ALICE is a way of defining (and understanding) our families, neighbors, and colleagues who work hard and earn above the Federal Poverty Level, but still do not make enough to afford a basic household budget. The ALICE program – through critical local research, proven national models, and best practice learning communities – provides a framework of language and measures that enable stakeholders to better understand and ultimately implement changes that improve the lives of ALICE.

EVOs: Participate in ALICE learning opportunities

Trauma-Informed Community Initiative:

The most effective step we can take in addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is to build a resilient and trauma-informed community; one equipped with the awareness, knowledge, and skills to support vulnerable children and families. We will change attitudes and behaviors at the individual, organizational, and systems levels through cross-sector trainings, community awareness and education, community advocacy, and supporting access to care.

EVOs: Participate in an ACEs training | Introduce trauma-informed practices to the workplace

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training:

UWSM is training community members to recognize warning signs of people at risk and to take appropriate action. MHFA – an evidence-based training – teaches people to identify, understand, and respond to mental illness. Participants learn risk factors and warning signs of mental illness, how to take steps to help someone in crisis, and available support options. At completion, individuals receive the official MHFA 3-year certification.

EVOs: Participate in MHFA training | Encourage discussions about creating a supportive workplace for mental health

Data Warehouse

With continuous data collection across key indicators and across the community, we can respond to our most pressing needs with more effective and timely action. The Warehouse will tell the story of our community well-being; bringing robust data from cross-sector partners together in one place to better reflect our community needs, trends, and successes.

Racial Equity Fund

For our community to achieve the Thrive2027 goals, we need all members of our community to have a place at the table so we can provide and implement solutions together that take into account the unique experiences of diverse populations, especially our Black and African American neighbors. The Racial Equity Fund supports the work of local nonprofits led by and serving people of color in our community, while advancing the work at the heart of Thrive2027.