

United Way of South Central Tennessee

Thriving Community Collaborative Grants

2026 - 2027

Creating a network of collaborative services in the Mitchell-Neilson neighborhood that demonstrates the power of coordinated support to help ALICE families thrive.

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About the United Way of South Central Tennessee

The United Way of South Central Tennessee is committed to improving lives by advancing opportunities for education, health, and financial stability for all. Through our annual Community Investment and Opportunity Grants, we award funds to nonprofit organizations serving across our 7-county region - Bedford, Cannon, Coffee, Lincoln, Moore, Rutherford, and Warren Counties.

Our grantmaking focuses on supporting programs that serve ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed) families and improve their long-term stability and ability to thrive. By investing in evidence-based programs and collaborative approaches, we work alongside our nonprofit partners to create lasting change across South Central Tennessee.

What Are Thriving Community Collaborative Grants?

Thriving Community Collaborative Grants fund innovative services delivered at the Resource Center at Mitchell-Neilson Elementary that work in coordination with United Way staff and other funded partners. Unlike traditional grants where organizations work independently, these grants create a collaborative network of services addressing multiple barriers ALICE families face and require quarterly coordination meetings, shared data collection, and a commitment to working together.



About the Mitchell-Neilson Schools and the surrounding neighborhood

Mitchell-Neilson is a Murfreesboro City School serving 785 PreK-6th Grade students on two campuses within a vibrant, diverse neighborhood in Murfreesboro [see map]. Families in this community work hard but face significant systemic barriers to economic stability:

- 98% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch
- 11% of students are experiencing homelessness—nearly four times the state average of 3%
- 19.7% chronic absenteeism rate, reflecting deeper family struggles with transportation, housing instability, and competing survival priorities
- While 43% of Rutherford County households are below the ALICE threshold, the Mitchell-Neilson school zone is located in an area where that rate reaches 57%—one of the county's most economically vulnerable neighborhoods
- Families face significant barriers to accessing services due to transportation challenges, work schedules, childcare needs, and lack of resources within walking distance

What We're Looking For

United Way's Resource Center at Mitchell-Neilson provides family support coordination and employment coaching through our Launch Point program. We're seeking innovative programming that complements these foundational services and addresses gaps in the neighborhood, such as:

- Youth development (after-school, summer, mentoring)
- Health services (dental, vision, mental health, chronic disease management)
- Transportation solutions
- Financial empowerment and pathways to stability (credit building, savings, home ownership)
- Early childhood programming or childcare support
- Adult education (literacy, ESL, GED, job skills training)
- Food security and nutrition programming
- Community building and leadership development
- Other creative approaches identified through community engagement

All services must be delivered on-site at the Resource Center at Mitchell-Neilson Elementary and demonstrate how they will coordinate with existing services and other funded partners.



Grant Details

Funding Amount: up to \$20,000

Grant Period: 1-year grants (July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027)

Eligibility:

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations
- Organizations must demonstrate capacity to deliver services on-site at the Resource Center at Mitchell-Neilson Elementary
- Programs must serve families in the Mitchell-Neilson neighborhood
- New and existing programs welcome to apply

Requirements:

- All services must be delivered on-site at the Resource Center at Mitchell-Neilson Elementary
- Participation in quarterly coordination meetings with United Way staff and other grant recipients
- Commitment to collaborative service delivery and coordination with existing Resource Center programs
- Participation in developing shared measurements and data collection processes after awards are made
- Willingness to share information and coordinate services with other providers serving the same families

Additional Funding Opportunities: Community Investment & Opportunity Grants

United Way of South Central Tennessee also offers region-wide grant programs to support nonprofits serving ALICE families across our seven-county area:

Community Investment Grants (funding of \$10,000 or more) support established or new programs with significant impact potential and comprehensive evaluation plans.

Opportunity Grants (funding up to \$9,999) provide flexible funding for smaller-scale programs addressing critical needs in our community through a streamlined application process.

Both grant programs prioritize evidence-based approaches, collaborative partnerships, and programs that address gaps in services. For more information and to apply, visit yourlocaluw.org/grants.



Application Process & Timeline

Key Dates

- Application Opens: February 10, 2026
- Intent to Apply Deadline: March 2
- Application Deadline: March 10, 2026 at 11:59 PM CST
- Review Period: March – May 2026
- Funding Decisions Announced: Mid-June 2026
- Grant Period: July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

How to Apply

Step 1: Prepare Your Materials

All applicants must submit:

- Completed online application
- Program Budget Template
- Patriot Act Form
- Partnership Agreement

Plus one of the following:

- Up-to-date Giving Matters profile, OR
- The following documents:
 - 501(c)(3) verification
 - Most recent Annual Audit or Financial Review
 - Most recent 990 Form
 - State Charitable Solicitation Letter
 - Current Board of Directors list

For assistance creating or updating your Giving Matters profile, visit the [Giving Matters Nonprofit Resource Guide](#).

Step 2: Submit Your Application

Complete and submit your application online at: <https://form.jotform.com/260395161803152>. You will receive an automated email confirmation with a copy of your submission.

Questions?

Contact Ella Weaver at ella.weaver@yourlocaluw.org.



Review & Selection Process

Application Review

Each application is reviewed by Mitchell-Neilson community stakeholders, including school personnel, local business leaders, and neighborhood representatives who understand the community's unique context and needs. All reviewers use a standardized scoring rubric (see Appendix D) to evaluate applications based on:

- Case for Funding: Compelling need in Mitchell-Neilson neighborhood, ALICE alignment, addressing service gaps while complementing Resource Center services
- Overall Strength of Program Design: Activities, evidence of success or best practices, on-site service delivery capacity and commitment to coordination
- Effective Use & Impact of Funding: Budget alignment, sustainability, realistic service targets
- Project Impact & Evaluation: Goals, outcomes, and capacity to participate in collaborative measurement development

Notification & Award

All applicants will be notified of funding decisions via email in mid-June 2026, regardless of outcome. Funded organizations will receive:

- Award letter with funding amount
- Fully executed Partnership Agreement
- Reporting requirements and schedule

Payment Schedule

Grant funds are distributed via monthly ACH payments throughout the grant period (July 2026 – June 2027).

Thriving Community Grants Rating Factors

This rubric uses a weighted scoring system. Factors marked with ** are assigned a higher point value and contribute more significantly to the overall score.

Case for Funding

1. Statement of need is compelling, uses current data, and clearly defines the priority population.
2. Program directly addresses barriers faced by ALICE households and aligns with selected ALICE need categories.**
3. Service gap is clearly defined and program complements rather than duplicates existing services at the Resource Center.

Overall Strength of Program Design

4. Program activities, timeline, and implementation plan are clearly described and feasible for the grant cycle.**
5. Program demonstrates evidence of success (existing programs) or alignment with best practices (new programs).
6. Place-based service delivery plan is clearly described, including proposed days, times, and space/resource needs at the Resource Center.**

Effective Use and Impact of Funding

7. Program has a clear, consistent, and reasonable budget.
8. Use of United Way funds is specific and well-justified with diverse revenue sources supporting implementation.**
9. Target number of individuals served is clearly defined and realistic for the program scope and budget.

Project Impact and Evaluation

10. Program goals and outcomes are clear, measurable, and achievable.**
11. Organization demonstrates capacity and willingness to participate in shared data collection and collaborative measurement processes.
12. Evaluation plan demonstrates appropriate systems for collecting and tracking data throughout the funding cycle.

Overall

13. Overall, the program narrative, budget, and evaluation plan demonstrate strong likelihood of program success if funded.**
14. The applicant demonstrates organizational capacity, experience, and willingness to collaborate effectively within the Thriving Community cohort model.