

UNITED WAY MESSAGING TOOLKIT

May 2024

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01

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW

Regardless of the industry or product, an organization's brand is one of its most important assets, which over time must be protected and nurtured.

Our brand is more than just our logo: it is a guide for the way our organization thinks, acts, and communicates. Consistent and clear messages build brand equity and clearly articulate how our brand is differentiated and unique. United Way's brand strategy and story, locally and globally, come to life through our brand promise, pillars, and personality. The brand strategy provides a unified platform to clarify our purpose and amplify our impact around the world for greater brand recognition, relevance, and revenue.

In this toolkit, you'll find:

- An overview of United Way's refreshed global brand strategy
- Universal messaging that can be adapted for external communications
- Guidance for infusing the brand personality into communications
- Sample messaging for communicating your United Way's impact
- Strategies and tactics for creating audience-specific messages

WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOLKIT

If you work for, partner with, or represent United Way in any way, then this toolkit is for you. No matter what role you serve in, the ability to think, act, and communicate in a manner that reflects who we are and what we stand for is essential. **All of us are brand champions.**

While every local organization is unique, we all benefit when we communicate as a unified network. Consistent and credible stories unite people, build trust, and inspire action.

The activities and recommendations in this toolkit are designed to help you answer audiences' core questions: Why should I believe in United Way? How does United Way impact my community and my life? How do I know that my individual donation, volunteerism, partnership, or advocacy makes a difference?

For more than 130 years we've proven that whenever there's a need in our communities, United Way is there. This toolkit is your guide to carrying that legacy forward, mobilizing communities to action today and tomorrow.

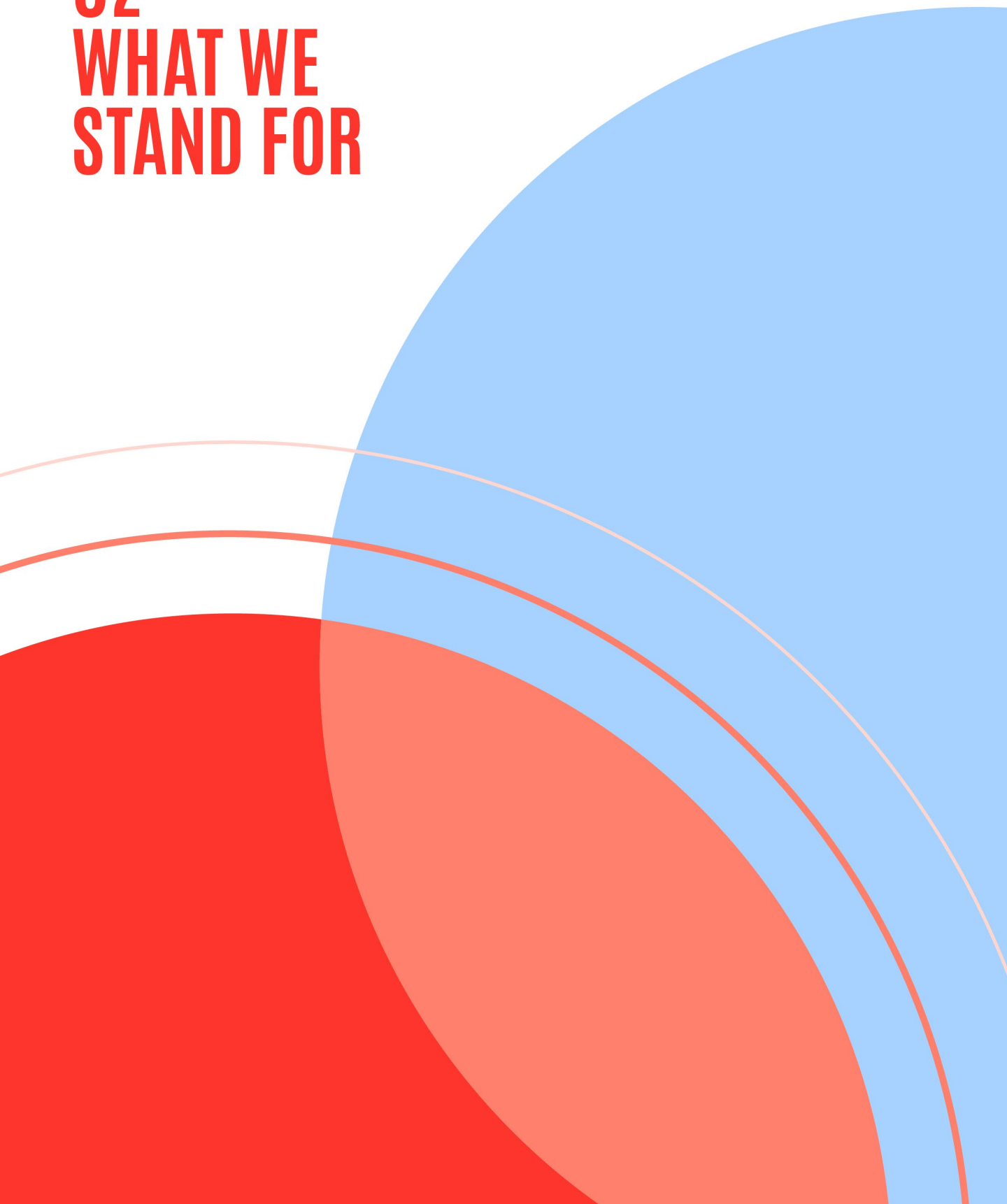
HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to help clarify what United Way stands for, how we are different, and why audiences should support, champion and partner with us.

The following pages provides guidance on what we say (brand strategy and messaging), how we say it (personality), and to whom we say it (audience mapping) to drive awareness, affinity, and action.

This toolkit is a guidebook – not a rule book. The goal is to create consistency while respecting the diversity of local United Ways and our many audiences around the world.

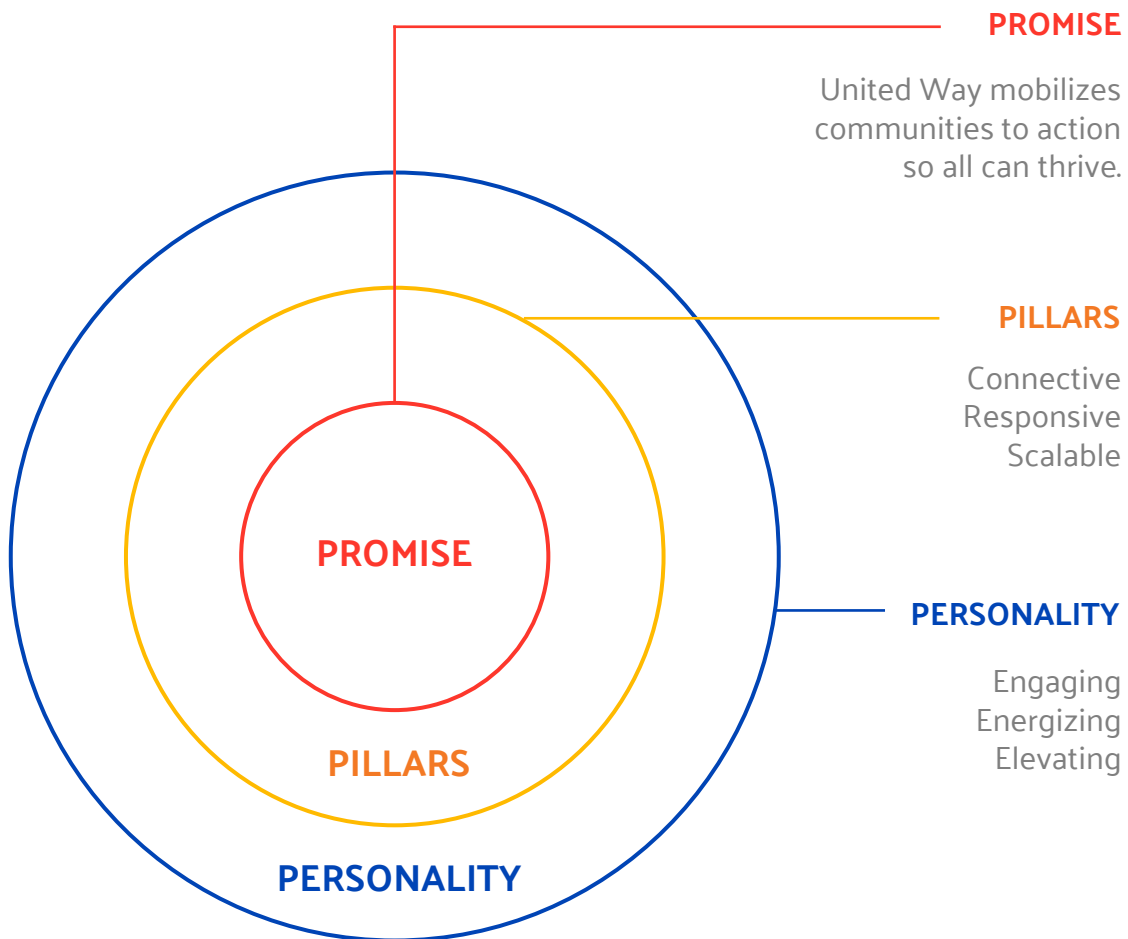
02 WHAT WE STAND FOR



OVERVIEW

Our brand strategy clarifies what we are about, how we benefit communities, and why audiences should engage with us. It guides the way we think, act, and communicate.

To responsibly manage our brand, we must present ourselves as having a shared promise, pillars, and personality.



PROMISE

Our brand promise crystallizes what United Way stands for and how we're different, and makes the case for why audiences should engage.

United Way mobilizes
communities to action
so all can thrive

- Claims our identity as a community action network
- Counters misperceptions as "passive" and a "middle-man"
- Can be scaled from local to regional to global

- Uses plain-language to address our shared goal – addressing the root causes of inequality
- Speaks to equitable solutions in terms that can be embraced by all

- Uplifts language from local United Ways, and is a nod to "Thriving United Ways"

PILLARS

Our brand pillars capture United Way's defining strengths.

CONNECTIVE

We bring a comprehensive approach to every challenge.

RESPONSIVE

We actively listen and swiftly respond to community needs.

SCALABLE

We share knowledge and scale impact so all can thrive.

PERSONALITY

Our personality codifies United Way's voice, look and feel across expressions and experiences, and influences how we show up and interact with our communities, partners, and the general public.

We're...	So...	That means...	But never...
ENGAGING	Our communications are real, relatable and purposeful, connecting people to possibility.	Personal Purposeful Accessible	Unprofessional Unbending Undiscerning
ENERGIZING	Our communications are dynamic and forward-facing, rallying our audiences to action.	Inspiring Mobilizing Activating	Unrealistic Exhausting Frenetic
ELEVATING	Our communications show how we seek to build up strength in every community, so all can rise.	Hopeful Emboldening Amplifying	Trite Intimidating Overwhelming

IMPACT AREAS

In clear and concrete terms, our impact areas define the specific ways we are bringing our brand promise to life.

While our offerings vary across the United Way network, our collective work centers around four impact areas that support our ambitious goal of ensuring all can thrive. These are: **Healthy Community, Youth Opportunity, Financial Security, and Community Resiliency.**

On the next page are our impact areas, together with their definitions and examples of associated initiatives the network is pursuing in service to them. Collectively, they help audiences understand the breadth and depth of our impact to help drive engagement and support. **These impact areas are a critical component of our brand strategy and should be used consistently to frame the specific programs and initiatives your United Way is activating to benefit your community.**

WHY THESE AREAS?

Global brand perception research was conducted with target audiences to identify our brand's strengths and opportunity areas. This research revealed an imperative to move away from generic impact category descriptors (i.e. health, education, income) to more ownable, outcome-oriented frames:

- “Health” has transitioned to “Healthy Community” to emphasize how we are improving well-being for all and advancing equitable health access through a broader array of interventions, including nutrition, food security, mental health support and more.
- “Education” has transitioned to “Youth Opportunity” to capture the full breadth of how we are helping prepare young people to realize their potential from cradle to career.
- “Income”/ “Financial Stability” has transitioned to “Financial Security” to better convey that United Way is not just focused on income (which may not be a livable wage) or financial stability *today*, but on creating pathways to a stronger, more sustainable financial future.
- The fourth impact area, “Community Resiliency,” is new, and was created to elevate the many ways United Way is addressing urgent community needs (e.g. through 211 and immediate crisis and disaster response) while contributing to long-term, systemic community strengthening (e.g. through emergency preparedness, environmental stewardship, and long-term disaster recovery and mitigation efforts.)

IMPACT AREAS (CONT'D)

From strengthening local resilience to advancing health, youth opportunity, and financial security, United Way is mobilizing communities to action so all can thrive.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Improving health and wellbeing for all

Associated initiative examples:

- Healthcare access
- Maternal and child health
- Nutrition and food security
- Healthy spaces and physical activity
- Chronic and infectious disease awareness and prevention
- Mental health support
- Substance misuse recovery and prevention

FINANCIAL SECURITY

Creating a stronger financial future for every generation.

Associated initiative examples:

- Adult education, job training, and career pathways
- Financial education and coaching
- Homelessness prevention, affordable housing, and homeownership
- Small business support
- Public benefits access

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

Helping young people realize their full potential

Associated initiative examples:

- Childcare and early childhood education
- In-school, after-school and summer learning
- Family engagement
- Literacy development
- College and career readiness

COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Addressing urgent needs today for a better tomorrow

Associated initiative examples:

- Crisis hotline and support
- Emergency preparedness
- Disaster relief and recovery
- Environmental stewardship and sustainability

HOW TO CUSTOMIZE

Shared language builds brand recognition and affinity. While the labels and definitions for United Way's impact areas should always be used as presented here, each United Way is encouraged to customize the list of associated initiatives to reflect their priority areas of work.

03 WHAT WE SAY

The background of the page is composed of several curved, overlapping bands of color. At the top is a solid orange band. Below it is a thick yellow band. Under the yellow band is a dark blue band, which is further defined by two thin white curved lines that follow its upper and lower edges. The bottom portion of the page is a solid dark blue.

OVERVIEW

Our messaging is what we communicate.

To mobilize audiences to action, it is essential to craft compelling messages that are clear, credible, and concise.

The following pages provide a set of universal messages that can be adapted for use across audiences in external communications, as well as best practices and tools for local United Ways to turn our strategies into relevant and actionable stories.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGING

Universal messages convey the essence of our brand strategy and story in language that is suitable for a variety of audiences and contexts.

Each United Way will need to adapt the universal messages in this toolkit to their local contexts. Specific guidance on customization is provided for both the social media one-liner and the boilerplate.

At the end of the universal messaging section, there is an exercise that provides guidance for how to ensure that other high-level local messages, like elevator speeches, are created in a way that honors local differences while remaining unified with the global network.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Social Media One-Liner

Best for: organizational descriptor for social media and press

From strengthening local resilience to advancing health, youth opportunity, and financial security, United Way is mobilizing communities to action so all can thrive.

HOW TO CUSTOMIZE

The one-liner can be adapted with minimal changes: Update with your local United Way name/location and adjust to emphasize your local impact priorities. See below for an example.

United Way Colombia

By investing and innovating in education, United Way Colombia is mobilizing communities to action so all can thrive.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Boilerplate

Best for: Press Releases, Formal Introductions

United Way mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive.

True to our founding spirit, whenever there is a need in our communities, United Way is there. We bring a comprehensive approach to every challenge, actively listening and responding to local needs. Our reach across tens of thousands of communities means we can share innovations and scale impact to improve lives around the world.

From strengthening local resilience to advancing health, youth opportunity, and financial security, we're working towards a future where every person in every community can reach their full potential.

To learn more, visit www.unitedway.org.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGING (CONT'D)

HOW TO CUSTOMIZE

To reflect both our shared global promise and local impact, we recommend that local United Ways focus their revisions on particular parts of the boilerplate. See below for one example, which illustrates where and how each local United Way could make refinements.

United Way mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive.

Start with our shared promise

[For more than 20 years, United Way Ghana]

Include local name and duration of service

has partnered with local communities to co-create solutions to people's most pressing challenges. We take a comprehensive approach, listening and responding to local needs.

Include our shared founding spirit and brand strengths (comprehensive, responsive)

[With our community partners, United Way Ghana creates

pathways to better healthcare, education, and job opportunities. Each year, more than 55,000 young learners receive education support; more than 12,000 people participate in health screenings and receive vital medications; and more than 4,800 individuals access job training and small business support to help build the foundations for a brighter future.]

Include your impact areas and provide a high-level summary of your impact (no more than one metric per impact area)

As part of a global network of more than 1,000 United Ways, we help to share innovations and scale impact to improve lives around the world. Together, we're working towards a future where every person and community can rise.

Include language that connects local to global, our shared brand strength (scalable)

To learn more, visit [www.unitedwaygh.org].

Update with your web address

UNIVERSAL MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Elevator Speech

Best for: Verbal Introductions and Informal Discussions

United Way is a global nonprofit that mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive.

With deep local roots around the world, we see how our communities' greatest challenges are connected – and how we can bring people and resources together to address them.

That's why we're here, in our communities, always listening and ready to respond. Working together with our neighbors, we're strengthening local resilience and advancing health, youth opportunity, and financial security for all. With more than a thousand United Ways around the world, we share ideas and innovations to drive global impact.

Every day, our communities show that when people unite to take action, change is possible. Together, we're creating a future where everyone, everywhere can reach their full potential.

If you have
a minute

A little longer

Even more

ACTIVITY: IN YOUR OWN WORDS

An elevator speech is a clear, concise explanation that you can use to spark interest in your organization. It can be helpful to have an elevator speech specifically for your local United Way, program, or initiative. In the space on the following page, craft a personalized elevator speech for your own use. This elevator speech is meant to build on and supplement, rather than replace, the universal elevator speech on the page above.

A few things to keep in mind:

- Keep it brief (no more than 200 words)
- Keep it simple (use easy-to-understand language and short blocks of text)
- Keep it aligned (update to reflect your focus and impact but keep ideas and some language from the universal messages so it feels related to the global network)

ALIGNING LOCAL MESSAGES TO GLOBAL STRATEGY

High-level local messages, like your elevator speech, should incorporate the universal brand promise: “United Way mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive.”

These messages should also draw from and build on language related these core brand concepts:

- **Being connective:** Taking a comprehensive approach; seeing how issues are connected, and connecting different people, organizations, ideas and resources to solve them
- **Being responsive:** Actively listening to the community; being ready to respond when a need arises; being ready to go where there’s a need in our community; supporting people and communities through everyday challenges and moments of crisis
- **Being scalable:** Transforming individual lives and communities; sharing and scaling innovation with United Ways around the world
- **Making a difference across impact areas:** Healthy Community, Youth Opportunity, Financial Security, Community Resiliency

—

Y

BEST PRACTICES

	Instead of...	Say this...	Why?
Style	Every year, 150 people are permanently housed.	Every year, we help 150 people secure a stable place to call home, transforming their lives for the better.	The active voice reflects our “energizing” personality trait and generally creates more concise sentences. Also expresses that people uplift themselves, rather than change being done to or for them.
	United Way changes systems and communities for the better.	When we take action together, we can create change for all.	Centering community action highlights our “elevating” personality trait and shows there is a place for everyone to be a part of making change.
Framing	United Way has global reach with local impact.	United Way is taking action here in [location] and in communities around the world.	Leads with local impact as the entry point, which is a key audience driver, then shows scale of United Way’s action.
	Global warming is creating a climate emergency. The clock is ticking, and we need to act before it’s too late.	Together, we’re protecting people and places from natural disasters, so we can all thrive for generations to come.	Leads with and inspires trust in collective action for universal benefit. Avoids language that is alarmist, divisive or defeatist, even when describing a pressing challenge.
Language	Together, we must...	Together, we can...	Invites reader to take action, rather than commanding, which can be off-putting rather than inspiring.
	We’re on the ground, helping communities build capacity.	Together, we’re helping communities grow stronger.	Communicates what we do in plain language rather than jargon.



04 **HOW WE SAY IT** **[OUR PERSONALITY]**

OVERVIEW

Our tone and style – the **way** we communicate – is just as important as **what** we communicate. Speaking and writing in a consistent style helps audiences recognize United Way immediately. Our brand personality will help you communicate in an authentic and accessible way.

WHAT IS BRAND PERSONALITY?

Brand personality is the tone, manner, and style in which we communicate. Personality is defined by a set of traits that shape how our communications look and feel.

These traits inform the tone and style of all our expressions and experiences. They also provide evaluation criteria that help us determine whether our communications “sound” distinctly like United Way.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A recognizable personality is one of the most powerful tools an organization can utilize to elevate reputation and encourage support. A clear, coherent, and consistent personality conveys the authenticity and character of an organization.

A unified personality helps us:

- Differentiate from peers
- Emphasize our relevance and impact
- More strongly influence audiences to give, volunteer, partner, and advocate

WHAT IS UNITED WAY'S BRAND PERSONALITY?

Our personality codifies United Way's voice, look, and feel across expressions and experiences.

We're...	So...	That means...	But never...
ENGAGING	Our communications are real, relatable, and purposeful, connecting people to possibility.	Personal Purposeful Accessible	Unprofessional Unbending Undiscerning
ENERGIZING	Our communications are dynamic and forward-facing, rallying our audiences to action.	Inspiring Mobilizing Activating	Unrealistic Exhausting Frenetic
ELEVATING	Our communications show how we seek to build up strength in every community, so all can rise.	Hopeful Emboldening Amplifying	Trite Intimidating Overwhelming

WHERE DO WE USE IT?

Our personality should be applied across all brand experiences and expressions, including advertising, marketing, press materials, newsletters, emails, web copy, social media, and internal communications.

The more consistently we show up as one United Way, the more clearly we convey to audiences who we are, what sets us apart, and why they should take action with us.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES



With simple designs, groundbreaking products and a fresh voice, **Apple** makes it accessible and appealing to use the latest tools and technologies. Audiences around the world expect every Apple experience to feel innovative, intentional, and inspiring.



Likewise, when we think of **LEGO**, from their colorful blocks and build kits to larger-than-life theme parks and movies, we think of imagination, playfulness, and fun.



With high-performance outdoor clothing and a focus on sustainable practices, **Patagonia** inspires consumers to embrace an active lifestyle with reverence for the natural world. Consumers associate their brand with an adventurous, responsible, and earth-friendly spirit.

From technology to toys to trekking, there is no doubt each of these brands has a distinctive personality – a consistent way they show up and express themselves across audiences and channels.

It's their undeniable spirit, their way of life, their unique voice. It means that, no matter the product, project or person they engage with, audiences immediately recognize the brand's energy, its positive defining qualities. That's the power of a strong brand personality.

BEFORE/AFTER EXAMPLES

Before

After

Why?

The challenges presented by climate change are daunting – but United Way believes we can make a real difference in protecting our environment by working together and supporting each other. Together, we have the power to heal and protect our Earth.

Together with community partners, United Way is addressing environmental challenges to protect the well-being of people and planet. United, we bring a comprehensive approach to promoting a healthier world – today and for future generations.

To reflect our energizing and elevating personality traits, the revision connects protecting the planet with its human impact and calls on our shared responsibility to safeguard the future.

Climate communications research indicates that these values (protection in the present and responsibility to the future) unite and galvanize audiences from all walks of life; while centering imminent/overwhelming threat or the science of climate change can be more divisive.

At 3M, we amplify our impact by partnering with United Way of Jamaica. Do your part by donating today, and we'll match your donation.*

United Way opens pathways for our neighbors to thrive. We hope you'll join us in building a better future for Jamaica – and we'll double the difference you can make by matching your donation.

The rewrite leads with community impact first, rather than corporate identity and expectation (i.e., “give because we all want to help our community,” rather than “give because that’s what we do/what’s expected of you here”).

This invites rather than mandates participation, while creating an energizing and elevating tone.

MyFreeTaxes helps people file their federal and state returns without spending any money in tax preparation fees. It also screens for credit and deduction eligibility such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit to ensure filers receive their maximum tax refund, and lets filers check for any missed stimulus payments.

With your support, United Way runs MyFreeTaxes, simplifying the tax filing process and providing peace of mind for millions of people each year. By screening for credit and deduction eligibility at no cost, MyFreeTaxes ensures individuals and families have more time and money to spend where it matters most. Together, we're building pathways to financial confidence and security for all.

The revision describes the offering in a way that positions United Way and community members as active participants in changemaking and clarifies the positive impact of getting involved with United Way. This embodies our engaging and energizing personality traits.

* Sample text for workplace campaign corporate partner; not drawn from an actual campaign.

ACTIVITY: BEFORE/AFTER

Before

With one in seven Americans relying on food pantries and meal programs, the need for reliable food sources is growing. To address this need, Wells Fargo and United Way teamed up over the holiday season to help individuals stock pantries across the nation.

This joint holiday campaign, which ran November 28 through December 30, made it possible for people to drop off canned goods at any of Wells Fargo's 5,900 branch locations. Individuals in 17 cities could also visit a pop-up mobile food bank to drop off items, learn about hunger across America, donate to United Way or decorate a placemat to brighten someone's meal at a food pantry. Nearly 1,900 Wells Fargo employees supported this effort through their volunteerism. The effort resulted in more than 251,000 pounds of food collected, which combined with monetary donations, was enough to serve 433,814 meals.

After

What changes would make this passage more:

ENGAGING

- Personal
- Purposeful
- Accessible

Potential strategies:

- Use active voice, plain language and short blocks of text
- Incorporate personal stories or reference human impacts (i.e., "help hardworking families put food on the table" rather than only "end hunger")
- Be selective with data, which can feel busy or impersonal. By using minimal data, the numbers that matter most are obvious and memorable

ENERGIZING

- Inspiring
- Mobilizing
- Activating

Potential Strategies:

- In introductions, get to the biggest "why" or the ultimate goal (i.e., "so students have all they need to learn today and thrive in the future," rather than "so students are prepared for the school year")
- Make people the drivers of change whenever possible (i.e., "communities raised \$XX" rather than "the program raised \$XX")

ELEVATING

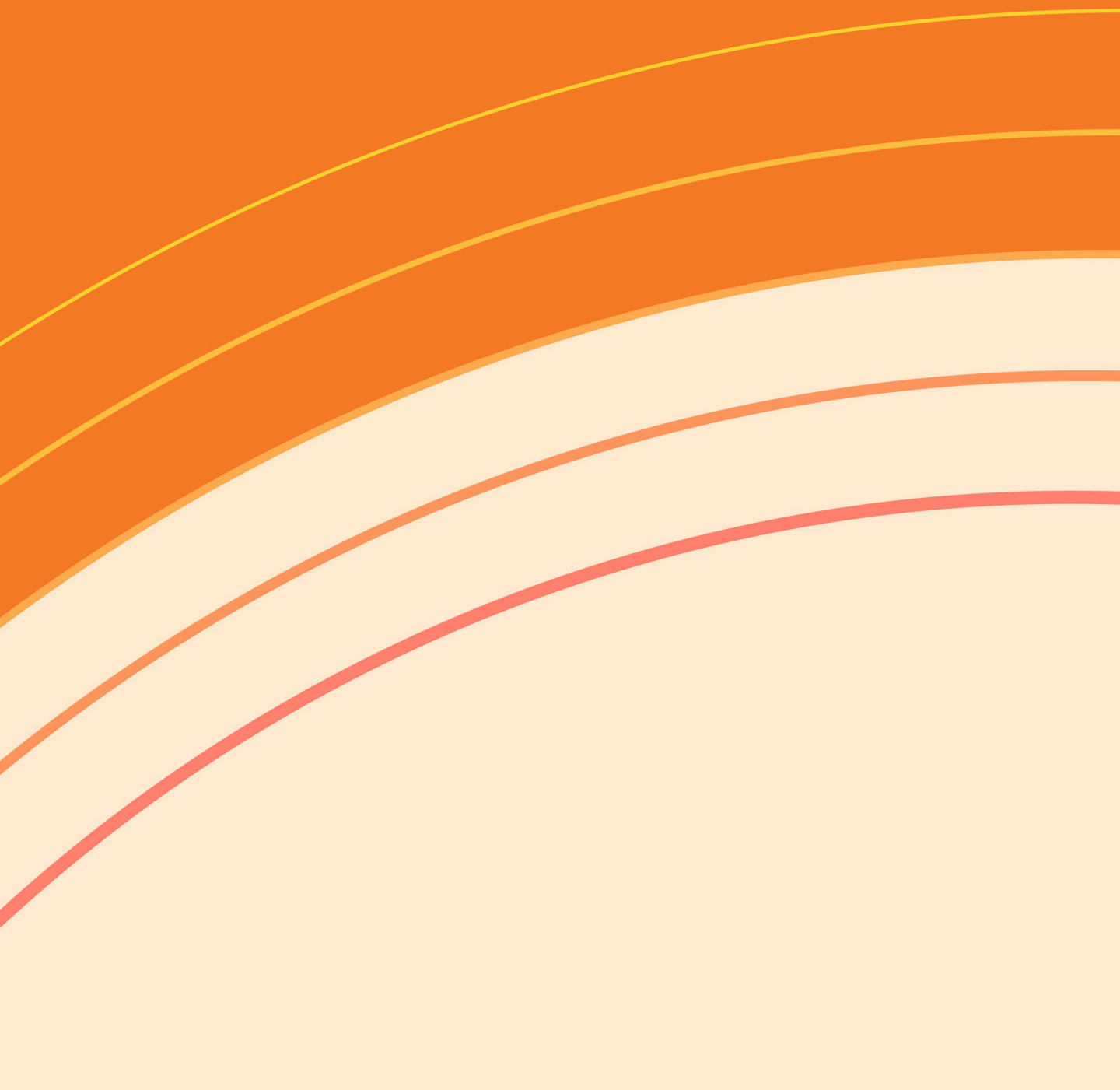
- Hopeful
- Emboldening
- Amplifying

Potential Strategies:

- Define communities by what they're working toward first, rather than what they lack or need first; start with the project goals, then define barriers and needs
- When possible, connect positive outcomes to the bigger picture, to the future, or to other ways to support. This helps turn past successes into forward momentum

[illegible]

05 IMPACT-SPECIFIC MESSAGING



HEALTHY COMMUNITY MESSAGING

Overview Messaging

Everyone deserves the opportunity to live their healthiest life. At United Way, we help people overcome barriers to good health by improving access to nutritious food and quality health education and services, including preventative care, maternal and child health, mental health support, and more.

Topic <small>Relevant issue within the impact area.</small>	Framing the Challenge <small>Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.</small>	How We're Making a Difference <small>Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.</small>
Health Care and Insurance Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our health is essential to our overall quality of life. But for many, the potential to live a healthy life is limited by where they live, how much money they earn, or discrimination they face based on certain aspects of their identity. • Health inequity is influenced by interconnected factors including economic stability, environment, education, food, community, and healthcare. These are known as the social determinants of health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At United Way, we believe everyone deserves the opportunity to live their healthiest life. • Working with community partners, we help people overcome barriers to healthy living by improving access to quality health care – including preventative services and mental health support – regardless of their financial challenges or insurance status.
Maternal and Child Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the world has made significant progress reducing maternal and newborn deaths, too many mothers and children continue to suffer adverse health effects from preventable or treatable causes due to lack of access to quality, affordable health care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Way makes quality health care available to underserved mothers and children so they can survive and thrive during children's formative years. • United Way Worldwide partnered with Deloitte Health Equity Institute to create the “Doorways to Health for Mothers of Color” program. Together with Black women, healthcare professionals, and other community collaborators, U.S. United Ways are implementing evidence-based strategies to make pregnancy safer for parents of color.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Topic

Relevant issue within the impact area.

Framing the Challenge

Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.

How We're Making a Difference

Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.

Nutrition and Food Security

- Too many of our neighbors don't know where their next meal is coming from, and many more are unable to access healthy, nutritious food due to affordability or accessibility.
- Food insecurity is a complicated, systemic problem that affects communities around the world – one that is intertwined with poverty, low wages, educational opportunity, and health care access.

- **Around the world, United Way is partnering with community members, businesses, and nonprofits to make healthy food available to more people.**
- We're committed to helping all kids and families thrive by expanding access to healthy food and addressing the systemic challenges that contribute to hunger and food insecurity.
- We envision a world in which no person ever has to choose between putting food on the table and paying bills, and no child ever goes to bed hungry. We have the resources, the helping hands, and the influence to make this vision a reality.

Healthy Spaces and Physical Activity

- Many environmental aspects of the communities people live in can have adverse effects on health, including poor air and water quality, exposure to hazardous substances, inequitable housing conditions, and lack of access to green spaces and recreational areas.
- Physical activity is essential to good health, but many people lack access or experience barriers to exercise, based on their ability, age, gender, income level, race, or religious affiliation, or the characteristics of the communities in which they live.

- **United Way works closely with community members and partners to create safe, inclusive, and active environments where everyone can achieve good health.**
- Many United Ways support programs that promote physical activity and healthy eating to help cultivate healthier lifestyles for children.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Topic	Framing the Challenge	How We're Making a Difference
Relevant issue within the impact area.	Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.	Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.
Chronic and Infectious Disease Awareness and Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our health is essential to our overall quality of life. But for many, the potential to live a healthy life is limited by where they live, how much money they earn, or discrimination they face based on certain aspects of their identity. • Health inequity is influenced by interconnected factors including economic stability, environment, education, food, community, and healthcare. These are known as the social determinants of health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At United Way, we believe everyone deserves the opportunity to live their healthiest life. • That's why we're working to improve people's access to health education and quality health care, including preventative health services that can help people prevent, manage, and heal from chronic illness and infectious diseases.
Mental Health Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone has mental health, but unfortunately stigma, misinformation, and inequities create barriers that prevent many people from accessing positive mental health support in their community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Way plays an important role in providing mental health support to individuals and communities, while also creating the partnerships needed to remove barriers to mental health for all.
Substance Misuse Recovery and Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance misuse – including misuse of alcohol, tobacco, and prescription and illegal drugs – is a significant public health challenge that impacts individuals, families, and communities around the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Way is committed to helping people at risk of experiencing substance misuse disorders by supporting prevention, treatment, and recovery interventions delivered without stigma or judgment.

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY MESSAGING

Overview Messaging

Every young person deserves the opportunity to thrive. At United Way, we help children get off to a good start and empower youth to reach their full potential by breaking down barriers to success. We advance what works, including early childhood education, literacy development, access to a high-quality K-12 education, enrichment opportunities like afterschool and summer programs, college and career readiness, and family engagement, fostering a future where every young person can realize their dreams.

Topic

Relevant issue within the impact area.

Framing the Challenge

Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.

How We're Making a Difference

Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.

Childcare and Early Childhood Education

- The first six years of a child's life are critical for their brain development. During this time, environmental factors significantly influence their health, learning abilities, behavior, and future productivity. Although families, caregivers, and communities play a crucial role, there are gaps in the opportunities and resources available to support early childhood development.
- Educational inequity is shaped by various factors including economic stability, environment, access to resources, community support, and the quality of educational infrastructure. These factors collectively influence a person's educational outcomes and opportunities.

- **United Way supports parents, caregivers, and communities to create early learning opportunities for young children.**
- At United Way, we take a comprehensive approach to enhance early childhood development. We provide training for families, teachers, and caregivers; ensure access to nutrition and healthcare; improve childcare center quality and access; and advocate for corporate practices and public policies that prioritize investment in early childhood development.

In-School, Afterschool, and Summer Learning

- Ensuring equitable access to high-quality out-of-school-time (OST) and summer learning programs is essential for fostering the holistic development of children and youth, enabling them to reach their fullest potential.
- Quality OST programming benefits children and youth physically, socially, and emotionally. It can have positive impacts on young people's self-esteem, helps them build stronger relationships with both peers and adults, and decreases risk-taking behavior.

- **United Way prioritizes high-quality out-of-school (OST) programming as a crucial component of our comprehensive approach to preparing every young person for success.**
- United Ways play a key role in developing, implementing, and sustaining high-quality OST programs. Through a focus on academic support and increased student engagement, we contribute to improving academic performance and graduation rates.

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Topic Relevant issue within the impact area.	Framing the Challenge Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.	How We're Making a Difference Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.
College and Career Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the workplace evolves, there is a pressing need to equip young people with core content, technological competencies, soft skills, and awareness of environmental and community issues to succeed in school and in the workforce. • But despite society's increased need for an educated, skilled workforce, many young people lack access to the resources, support, and opportunities necessary for college and career readiness, with deep inequities based on ability, geography, income level, race, and other factors. • Globally, 1 in 5 young people ages 15 to 24 are neither employed nor receiving education or training that would prepare them for success in the job market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Way works across sectors to create opportunities for more young people to prepare for college and careers, empowering them to achieve their full potential and contribute positively to their communities. • We provide college and career exploration in schools; college preparation supports like financial aid applications and college fairs; the development of workforce ready skills and internships; and opportunities for our staff and volunteers to mentor students. • Our adaptable approaches support students everywhere to help them successfully navigate pathways to college and/or career success. • Several United Ways in the U.S. are piloting the Young Men United program to provide young men of color with academic and life skill support to graduate college and enter the workforce.
Family Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families and caregivers play pivotal roles in supporting young people's learning journeys. However, many face challenges in navigating the complexities of the educational system and may require assistance and encouragement to effectively advocate for their children's opportunities and success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At United Way, we know that family engagement plays a critical role in keeping kids in school and ensuring that they graduate prepared to thrive. • We inform, engage, and connect families with resources so they have more opportunities to support their children's educational success. • We empower families, schools, and supportive peers to nurture young people's academic and career achievements.

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Topic	Framing the Challenge	How We're Making a Difference
Relevant issue within the impact area.	Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.	Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.
Literacy Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Literacy lays the foundation for lifelong learning, critical thinking, and overall academic success. Being able to read proficiently early on is linked to better grades, higher chances of graduation, advancing in careers, and achieving long-term financial security. However, significant gaps exist in access to literacy attainment, disproportionately affecting children in underserved communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">United Way supports kids with essential literacy skills that set them up for success in school, work, and life.We're focused on closing literacy opportunity gaps through targeted initiatives that provide equitable access to literacy resources, guidance, and educational interventions.We collaborate with partners to promote literacy by enhancing out-of-school programs, creating reading spaces, increasing access to books and libraries, fostering family bonding with books, and empowering youth through literature that broadens their perspectives and sparks their imaginations.

FINANCIAL SECURITY MESSAGING

Overview Messaging

Everyone deserves the opportunity to earn a living that can sustain a family and build security for future generations. That's why we're helping hard working families make ends meet while connecting them with the education, financial tools, and job training opportunities to empower them to create a better, more sustainable future for themselves and their loved ones.

Topic Relevant issue within the impact area.	Framing the Challenge Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.	How We're Making a Difference Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.
Adult Education, Job Training, and Career Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the rapidly changing global economy, evolving technology, increased training criteria, and challenging life situations, many adults need more education and training to succeed in the job market. • Globally, while just over 5% of the world's workforce is currently unemployed as of 2024, that number is expected to rise due to growing inequality and stagnant productivity. • Lack of decent employment is an even larger challenge. Of the world's 3.3 billion working adults, fewer than half have steady work and a paycheck. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Way is working to help every person in every community get on a path toward financial security. That starts with access to education and training opportunities to prepare people for good-paying jobs with the potential to grow into long-term, sustainable careers. • Education is critical to economic security, so many United Ways help adults obtain secondary school diplomas, licenses, certifications, or vocational training. • Many United Ways are partnering with employers, educators, and government entities to create pipeline training for good-paying jobs, helping both individuals and entire communities to thrive.
Financial Education and Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how to use financial tools like checking and savings accounts helps people build financial security. But it's not something every family or school teaches. Accessing financial education through coaching and/or workshops helps people save, pay bills safely, access loans, and increases resiliency in times of financial crisis, experts say. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Way works with financial institutions and community partners to make financial education, coaching, and related services more accessible to people who need them. • United Way Worldwide's MySmartMoney resources help people navigate short- and longer-term financial challenges. • Many United Ways enlist financial professionals as volunteers to provide education and coaching in their area of expertise.

FINANCIAL SECURITY MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Topic Relevant issue within the impact area.	Framing the Challenge Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.	How We're Making a Difference Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.
Homelessness Prevention, Affordable Housing, and Homeownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone deserves access to a safe, stable home. Yet in major cities across the world, homelessness, housing insecurity, and limited affordable housing has reached crisis proportions. Every year, 211 – the 24/7 resource in 99% of the U.S. and Canada that's supported by United Way – receives more requests for help finding housing and financial assistance for housing expenses than anything else. Homeownership is one of the most important vehicles for building generational wealth. However, the credit needed to purchase a home remains out of reach for many due to entrenched inequities including racial segregation, income inequality, and unfair lending practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At United Way, we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to live in an affordable, safe, stable home, and for homeownership to be an achievable goal for every family. United Ways are helping people connect with short-term shelter as well as providing services for people to overcome the barriers that can get in the way of long-term stable housing, including employment, substance misuse recovery, and mental health support. Some United Ways offer financial coaching geared toward getting people the resources and information they need to successfully navigate the challenges of buying their first home.
Small Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While approximately half of the world's jobs are provided by small businesses, running a small business can be unpredictable and challenging: 18% of small businesses fail within their first year, while 50% fail after five years. Entrepreneurs – especially those of color – often lack access to capital to expand and grow their businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small businesses form the backbone of local communities and economies. United Way is committed to helping entrepreneurs navigate financial challenges so they can help their families and communities thrive. United Way Worldwide's MyFreeTaxes program has created tax guides for small businesses, as well as a tax guide for gig economy workers, home-based childcare owners and businesses impacted by natural disasters. Many United Ways offer financial education, coaching, and more for small businesses through one-stop resource hubs.

FINANCIAL SECURITY MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Topic

Relevant issue within the impact area.

Framing the Challenge

Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.

How We're Making a Difference

Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.

Public Benefits Access

- Too many people don't access public benefits for which they're eligible. Sometimes that's because they don't know they're eligible, but often it's because they don't know how to access services or are overwhelmed by the process.
 - For example, millions of Americans are eligible for free tax preparation but pay high fees for this service, ultimately reducing the amount of the tax credits and refunds they receive.
- **Public benefits are government-funded financial assistance programs that help people meet basic needs like health care, housing, or food. United Way helps make it easier for people to understand and access the public benefits to which they are entitled.**
 - Many United Ways operate one-stop resource hubs – housed in community schools or stand-alone financial resource centers – that make it easy for people to find out what benefits they can claim.
 - 350 United Ways in the U.S. support their communities with free tax filing through United Way's [MyFreeTaxes](#) service, or through traditional VITA (Volunteer Income tax Assistance) programs.
 - [211](#) – the 24/7 resource in 99% of the U.S. that's supported by United Way – connects millions of people each year with locally available resources, including public benefits.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCY MESSAGING

Overview Messaging

Every community deserves the opportunity to prosper. At United Way we work with our neighbors to build resilient communities that are ready for any challenge. Through initiatives in crisis response, environmental stewardship, and disaster preparedness, we are strengthening the foundations of communities for a more sustainable and secure future.

Topic

Relevant issue within the impact area.

Framing the Challenge

Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.

How We're Making a Difference

Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.

Crisis Hotline and Support

- When facing a crisis, individuals and families need immediate access to reliable services and resources to meet their most urgent needs.
- The 211 network, supported by United Way Worldwide, receives an average of 42,000 calls per day.
- In 2023, the U.S. 211 network fielded nearly 16 million requests for support.
- The top needs of 211 callers include referrals for housing help (5.3 million requests), help with utilities (2.8 million requests), food relief (2.4 million requests), legal, consumer, and public safety needs (1.2 million requests), and mental health assistance. (1.1 million requests).
- **United Way's 211 partnership is a lifeline during times of crisis. Together we offer immediate guidance and support, ensuring our communities are never alone in their hour of need.**
- The 211 network is a critical resource for community members that connects them to trained specialists offering help with crisis and emergency counseling, disaster assistance, food, health care and insurance, stable housing and utilities assistance, employment services, veteran services, and childcare and family services.
- With over 2,000 expert call center specialists, the free and confidential 211 network is available to assist 99% of the U.S. population - in more than 180 languages.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCY MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Topic Relevant issue within the impact area.	Framing the Challenge Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.	How We're Making a Difference Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.
Emergency Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparedness is key to mitigating the impact of unforeseen disasters on communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Way empowers communities with the knowledge and resources to tackle systemic issues. Our proactive approach ensures communities are resilient and ready for any challenge. • United Way Worldwide's Disaster Resilience Committee provides real-time peer support, resources, and expertise to local United Ways experiencing disasters and leverages national, regional, and state capacity to strengthen overall community preparedness, response, and recovery.
Disaster Relief and Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural and man-made disasters have devastating impacts on communities, including loss of life, personal injury, illness, home displacement, and property destruction. Even after the immediate impact of disasters are addressed, communities continue to have long term recovery needs that can last for months or even years. • At least 12,000 people - 30% more than in 2022 - lost their lives due to floods, wildfires, cyclones, storms, and landslides globally in 2023. • More than 170,000 lives were lost due to war and violent conflicts throughout 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Ways across the globe are activating at the speed of need to support communities impacted by natural and man-made disasters. Whether through fundraising, volunteer management, providing direct services or supporting on the ground partners, local United Ways are stepping up to make a positive impact during times of crisis. • At United Way we leverage our community networks to facilitate compassionate, comprehensive aid. Our efforts in disaster relief and recovery show our commitment to fostering the strength and unity communities need to find ways forward. • In the wake of disasters, United Way steps in to provide help and hope. And long after the media loses interest in the impacted communities, we continue to help people recover and rebuild.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCY MESSAGING (CONT'D)

Topic

Relevant issue within the impact area.

Framing the Challenge

Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.

How We're Making a Difference

Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.

Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability

- Environmental sustainability is crucial for the well-being of our planet and future generations.
 - The climate crisis is not an isolated problem: it affects people in every country and every community – with disproportionate impacts on marginalized and low-income communities.
 - Climate change can exacerbate existing health disparities, with marginalized communities facing higher risks of climate-related health issues, including heat-related illnesses, vector-borne diseases, and mental health impacts.
 - Communities with lower socioeconomic status may face barriers in accessing resources for climate resilience, such as insurance coverage, emergency response services, and infrastructure improvements, further perpetuating inequalities in climate adaptation.
 - The climate crisis impacts all facets of life; we are already seeing the consequences of environmental change on health, the economy, and education.
- **At United Way we work with our neighbors to build resilient communities that are ready for any challenge. Environmental stewardship and sustainability are essential to ensuring that everyone in our communities can enjoy good health, safety, and economic prosperity – especially those who are most vulnerable.**
 - United Ways are directly addressing environmental challenges to foster sustainable communities around the world. Our recent efforts range from restoring vital ecosystems like mangroves and coral reefs to pioneering renewable energy initiatives. These projects not only protect against natural disasters but also bolster local economies and education, creating resilient communities in the face of a changing climate.
 - Political polarization around topics like climate change leads to inaction, keeping us from finding the solutions communities need. At United Way, we stay away from the rhetoric and focus on finding and implementing the solutions that work for individuals, families, and our communities. As an organization, we're focused on action, not political activism.
 - Together, we can propel people forward, protect the planet, and promote prosperity for all.

CROSS-IMPACT AREA TOPICS

Topic

Relevant issue connected to all impact areas.

Framing the Challenge

Use or adapt this messaging to introduce the specific challenge your United Way is helping to address.

How We're Making a Difference

Use or adapt this messaging to articulate how your United Way is making an impact in this topic area.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

- Around the world, deep-rooted systemic inequities hinder fair access to youth opportunity, financial security, and health. Overcoming these disparities requires a creative, intersectional approach that prioritizes equity.
- United Way believes that equity is the intentional inclusion of everyone. It is achieved when systemic, institutional and historical barriers based on race, gender, sexual orientation and other identities are dismantled and no longer predict socioeconomic, education, and health outcomes.

- **United Way champions equity by recognizing the profound impact of systemic barriers based on identity, and working to dismantle these barriers so everyone in our communities has the opportunities they need to thrive.**
- Through partnerships, strategic investment, and community engagement, United Way co-creates solutions to inequitable access to education, financial security and health.
- We are committed to building communities that embrace diversity, promote inclusion for all, and work to ensure that every individual has the chance to succeed.

Anti-Human Trafficking

- Human trafficking is illegal in every country but happens around the world and in our own communities.
- Human trafficking is a widespread human rights abuse that is often invisible. It takes place both around the world and in our own backyards. It is a complex and multi-dimensional problem that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities around the world.

- **United Way is committed to ending human trafficking and all systems that infringe on the rights of our fellow human beings.**
- United Ways around the world build and run individualized plans that detect, stop, and prevent human trafficking and strengthen social safety nets to support survivors.
- We are educating the public and raising awareness of the issue of human trafficking, while debunking myths and falsehoods.
- We work with survivor-run partner organizations to create new career pathways for people with lived experience of human trafficking, who often need financial assistance to rebuild their lives.

06 AUDIENCE-SPECIFIC MESSAGING

The background of the page features a series of overlapping, curved shapes in shades of red and orange. These shapes create a sense of depth and movement, with the colors transitioning from a lighter, almost white-red at the top to a deeper, more saturated red towards the bottom. The overall effect is modern and dynamic.

OVERVIEW

On the pages that follow, you'll find resources to help you communicate in a way that strengthens United Way's brand.

HOW TO USE THIS MESSAGING

The audience messaging is meant to serve as a guide to help you build strong, clear and impactful communications, from social media posts to speeches. These messages are a starting point and should be adapted and supplemented as needed to fit your purpose.

- **Topline Message:** This is the main point we would like to get across to the audience in all our communications. Everything you say to an audience should reinforce the topline message.
- **Supporting Messages:** Phrases that support the topline message. Depending on your needs, you might find that these sample messages are a good fit, or you might need to write some new language to achieve your communication goal.
- **Reasons to Believe:** Provide examples of concrete information that will help you make your point. Choose details as necessary to reinforce your communications and fill them in with your own numbers and statistics.
- **Calls to Action:** Provide a clear next step for your audience. Sometimes these are broad ("Support United Way today!") and other times very specific ("Submit grant applications by July 31").
- When taken together, a communication should follow this formula:
Key Message + Supporting Message + Reasons to Believe +
Call to Action = Finished Communication

ADAPTING MESSAGES BY REGION

The audience profiles and messaging covered in this toolkit are intended to provide general guidance that applies across countries and communities around the world. Each individual United Way can build upon these tools and adapt them to local context.

As a starting place for adapting messages, we offer a summary of research into what messages resonate most with donor audiences in different regions.

Top perceptions of United Way by region

Below are some message areas by region that may resonate most credibly with donors:

- In the **U.S.**, messages around creating opportunities, building stronger communities, and the impact areas
- In **Canada**, messages around creating opportunities, being a partner of choice, and a catalyst for change
- In **Latin America**, messages around being a partner of choice, creating opportunities, and advancing social and economic equality
- In **Europe**, messages around creating opportunities, advancing social and economic equality, and being a partner of choice
- In **South Korea**, messages around creating opportunities, being a catalyst for change, and advancing social and economic equality
- In **India**, messages around the impact areas, advancing social and economic equality, and being a catalyst for change
- In **Nigeria**, messages around being a catalyst for change, uniting communities for impact, and building stronger communities

For further data about regional donor behaviors, please see the Individual Donor audience profile.

AUDIENCES AT A GLANCE

Audience Name	Who They Are	What We'd Like Them To Do
CORPORATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large multinational, national or regional companies • Most have defined their purpose and aligned giving with their strategic focus • Many have employee giving and matching gift programs, as well as volunteer programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and champion United Way's value as a community mobilizer • Start or expand corporate partnerships, employee giving and volunteer programs • Recommend United Way as a nonprofit of choice to peer organizations and consumers
HIGH-NET-WORTH INDIVIDUALS (HNWIS) + FOUNDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with capacity to give significant gifts • Foundations that are family-run, private/independent, corporate, or community-based • Foundations that fund organizations through grantmaking, investments and/or operational support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and champion United Way's value as a community mobilizer • Start or expand funding • Recommend United Way as a nonprofit of choice to their personal and professional networks
INDIVIDUAL DONORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals from around the world who have donated time and/or money in the past year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and champion United Way's value as a community mobilizer • Build affiliation with United Way brand and impact (especially volunteers) • Start and/or expand giving • Recommend United Way as a nonprofit of choice
PUBLIC FUNDERS + POLICY-MAKERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, regional, and national elected officials • Members of international governing bodies • Advisors, thinktanks, and others who influence public policy decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and champion United Way's value as a community mobilizer • Select and trust United Way as a changemaking partner and advisor • Support policies that United Way advocates for
STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff at local United Ways and United Way Worldwide • Represent 37 countries across the globe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and live the United Way brand • Champion United Way in their personal and professional networks

CORPORATIONS – PROFILE

Who They Are

- Large multinational, national, or regional companies
- Almost all have robust Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals and reporting
 - 93% of the world's largest companies by revenue report on ESG metrics
- Most have defined their purpose and aligned giving with their strategic focus
- Many have employee giving and matching gift programs, as well as volunteer programs
 - 65% of Fortune 500 companies offer matching gift programs

What Motivates Them to Engage

- Alignment with their business, brand, and ESG/CSR strategies
- Local relevance, global reach
- Employee engagement and activation
- Maximized efficiency and magnified impact

What Keeps Them from Engaging

- Lack of strategic alignment
- Low understanding by/interest among employees
- Lack of demonstrated impact
- [For employees] Lack of perceived choice; mandated participation

What We'd Like Them to Do

- Understand and champion United Way's value as a community mobilizer
- Start or expand corporate partnerships, employee giving and volunteer programs
- Recommend United Way as a nonprofit of choice to peer organizations and consumers

CORPORATIONS – MESSAGING

Topline Message

- Rooted in communities around the world, United Way has the network and expertise to move your purpose forward and make your impact go further. With a comprehensive view, deep local expertise and broad global networks, we're your partner in mobilizing communities to action so all can thrive.

Supporting Messages

- Whether focused on educational opportunity or financial security, health access or disaster relief, we advance solutions with the greatest potential for lasting change.
- With partners across public, private and social sectors, we bring people together for outsized impact. Together, we can propel people forward, protect the planet and promote prosperity for all.
- Building on a century of community listening and collaboration, we can connect you to local expertise on the causes that matter most to your consumers and employees. That way, we're advancing the most effective strategies to amplify your social, environmental, and business impact.
- Together, we can address challenges at every level, from training parents for careers that support their families to advancing policies that boost our entire economy. With United Way, your giving goes further.

CTAs

- Together, let's open opportunities for all.
- Partner with United Way to energize your employees and elevate your community.

Sample Proof Points

- Personal impact stories from community members
- Statistics that demonstrate
 - United Way's impact in your community, or
 - United Way's global impact, or
 - United Way's progress in addressing unmet needs
- Recognition and awards from leaders and legislators

HIGH-NET-WORTH INDIVIDUALS + FOUNDATIONS – PROFILE

Who They Are

- Individuals with capacity to give significant gifts
- Foundations that are family-run, private/independent, corporate, or community-based
- Foundations that fund organizations through grantmaking, investments, and/or operational support
- Many individuals and most foundations have defined impact areas and measures

What Motivates Them to Engage

- Alignment with focus areas/passion causes
- Ability to amplify influence and impact
- Desire to invest in effective solutions with transformative, scalable results
- Transparent governance and measurable impact

What Keeps Them from Engaging

- Perception of high administrative costs/overhead
- Competing priorities
- Low understanding
- Lack of demonstrated impact

What We'd Like Them to Do

- Understand and champion United Way's value as a community mobilizer
- Start or expand funding
- Recommend United Way as a nonprofit of choice to their personal and professional networks

HIGH-NET-WORTH INDIVIDUALS + FOUNDATIONS – MESSAGING

Topline Message

- With deep roots in communities around the world, United Way has the local expertise and global reach to help you create community impact at scale. Alongside local partners, we bring a comprehensive approach to every challenge, listening to communities and mobilizing people behind solutions with the greatest potential to move us all forward. Together, we are opening pathways for every person and every community to thrive.

Supporting Messages

- We believe a strong community is one where all people can rise above challenges and realize a better tomorrow. From quality healthcare and education to social and financial wellbeing, United Way opens opportunities for people to build thriving lives.
- United Way combines generations of expertise with the power of community. When we come together with bold goals and coordinated action, we can drive positive change for all.
- We're deeply rooted in our community and actively listen to identify challenges and co-create solutions. Whenever a crisis or opportunity arises, we're here and ready to take action with data-driven, community-led innovations.
- Your investment in United Way uplifts communities everywhere, improving lives today and helping build a more just tomorrow.

CTAs

- Give today to increase your impact and transform your community.
- Partner with us to make meaningful change for more people.

Sample Proof Points

- Personal impact stories from community members
- Statistics that demonstrate
 - United Way's impact in your community, or
 - United Way's global impact, or
 - United Way's progress in addressing unmet needs
- Recognition and awards from leaders and legislators

INDIVIDUAL DONORS – PROFILE

Who They Are

- Individuals from around the world who have donated time and/or money in the past year

What Motivates Them to Engage

- Trust
- Relevancy
- Inspiration
- Emotional connection/love
- Tangible community impact

What Keeps Them from Engaging

- Low understanding/lack of clarity
- Concerns United Way is too big/broad to be fully transparent or efficient
- Lack of perceived relevance
- Lack of perceived impact
- Unclear avenues for engagement

What We'd Like Them to Do

- Understand and champion United Way's value as a community mobilizer
- Start and/or expand giving
- Recommend United Way as a nonprofit of choice

Region	Amount donated in last year	Average # of orgs supported in the last year	Most Important Causes
United States	50% gave \$100–\$999	3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Health Care • Place of Worship • Food Security • Animal Welfare
Latin America	47% gave less than \$100	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Health Care • Animal Welfare
Europe	39% gave less than €50	3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Health Care • Animal Welfare • Food Security
Canada	33% gave \$200–\$999	3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Health Care • Food Security • Place of Worship • Animal Welfare
South Korea	50% gave ₩100,000–₩499,999	1.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Health Care • Environment & Nature Conservancy
India	31% gave ₹20,000 or more	2.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Health Care • Education • Women/Girl Empowerment
Nigeria	37% gave ₦20,000–₦99,999	2.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place of Worship • Health & Health Care • Women/Girl Empowerment • Housing • Education

INDIVIDUAL DONORS – MESSAGING

Topline Message

- No matter the challenge, United Way's comprehensive approach and community roots mean we can find a way forward. We're here to strengthen communities every day, advancing financial security, providing opportunities for young people, and improving health for all. Together with local and global communities, we're building a future where everyone, everywhere, can thrive.

Supporting Messages

- Each of us can make a difference for a neighbor – but when we come together, we can make change for all. That's why, whenever there is a need in our communities, United Way is there.
- Together, we help people realize their potential, whether connecting people to healthcare, education, employment, or disaster relief. Whenever a challenge or opportunity arises, we're here and ready to take action.
- When people come together for good, we are greater. That's why we partner with people and nonprofits across the community to address issues at every level, from expanding affordable housing to ensuring more children learn to read.
- Our comprehensive approach means when you team up with us, your generosity has greater impact.

CTAs

- Let's take action together, so all of us can rise.
- Your giving goes further with United Way – donate today.

Sample Proof Points

- Personal impact stories from community members
- Statistics that demonstrate
 - United Way's impact in your community, or
 - United Way's global impact, or
 - United Way's progress in addressing unmet needs
- Recognition and awards from leaders and legislators

PUBLIC FUNDERS + POLICY MAKERS – PROFILE

Who They Are

- Local, regional and national elected officials
- Members of international governing bodies
- Advisors, thinktanks, and others who influence public policy decisions

What Motivates Them to Engage

- Understanding of their constituents' needs
- Community-level data (at local, regional, or national scale)
- Mobilization partner
- Unifying organization (nonpartisan)

What Keeps Them from Engaging

- Perception of high administrative costs/overhead
- Low understanding
- Lack of demonstrated impact
- Siloed organization

What We'd Like Them to Do

- Understand and champion United Way's value as a community mobilizer
- Select and trust United Way as a changemaking partner and advisor
- Support policies that United Way advocates for

PUBLIC FUNDERS + POLICY MAKERS – MESSAGING

Topline Message

- United Way mobilizes communities to rise above challenges and expand opportunities for all. With roots in tens of thousands of communities worldwide, our local expertise and global reach means we can innovate comprehensive solutions to pressing issues – and then scale up to reach more people in more places. With your support, we're building a future where everyone, everywhere can thrive.

Supporting Messages

- In partnership with our communities, we're championing policies that make life better for all of us, from increasing job opportunity and affordable housing to expanding access to quality healthcare and nutrition.
- With community partners across business, government and nonprofit sectors, we are uniquely positioned to spark collaboration and innovation. We address local challenges at every level and from every angle, so all people can reach their full potential.
- Building on decades of community listening and connection, we have the local perspectives and platform to respond quickly to moments of crisis and opportunity.
- We can help you determine what issues matter most to communities, and what policies will make the biggest impact – today and for our future.

CTAs

- Together, let's break down barriers so people can build thriving lives.
- Partner with us to help communities drive positive change.
- **Sample Proof Points**
 - Personal impact stories from community members
 - Statistics that demonstrate
 - United Way's impact in your community, or
 - United Way's global impact, or
 - United Way's progress in addressing unmet needs
 - Recognition and awards from leaders and legislators

STAFF – PROFILE

Who They Are

- Staff at local United Ways and United Way Worldwide
- Represent 37 countries across the globe

Most Important Goal for United Way in 3 - 5 Years (open-end)



Source: United Way Staff Survey 2023 (Additive)

What Motivates Them to Engage

- Purposeful work and passionate people
- Community impact at scale
- Community connector/convenor
- Brand reputation

What We'd Like Them to Do

- Understand and live the United Way brand
- Champion United Way in their personal and professional networks

What Keeps Them from Engaging

- Silos/lack of connection/resonance with the network
- Limited resources
- Concerns about organization's future

STAFF BRAND CHAMPIONS – MESSAGING

Topline Message

- At United Way, our people are our brand. Every day, through your words and actions, you serve, connect, and inspire people to take action for our community. Together, we're realizing our vision of a world where every person in every community is thriving.

Supporting Messages

NOTE: As addressed at the top of this guide, our brand promise crystallizes what United Way stands for and our brand pillars (connective, responsive, scalable) capture United Way's defining strengths. These foundational elements of our brand can be adapted into behavioral messaging for our staff brand champions to adopt:

Our Promise

- We mobilize people to take action in our community, so we can create a better future for us all.

How We Connect

- We actively invite and convene people to join us, so we can build the comprehensive perspective needed to make a lasting difference.

How We Respond

- We listen to, respect, and respond to the needs of all people, of all backgrounds and identities. When we come together, we are stronger and can create positive change for all.

How We Scale Impact

- We unite people across all places, backgrounds, and life experiences to make a difference in our community and collectively in the world.

CTAs

- Together, let's take action so all can thrive.
- United, let's be the way to create positive change in our community.

Sample Proof Points

- Personal impact stories from staff and volunteers.
- Testimonials from community members and partners that speak to how United Way staff members live our mission and values.

ACTIVITY: AUDIENCE-MAPPING

The audience profiles and messages in this toolkit are intended to serve as inspiration and not as a replacement for your localized expertise. Often, you'll be able to build a more detailed and specific profile based on your knowledge of the audiences you communicate with.

Part 1: Think about an upcoming audience-targeted communication, or an audience you communicate with frequently. Using the chart below, develop an audience profile. This profile can be used as a drafting and editing tool to ensure that the messages you craft for this audience align with their motivators and address any barriers to action.

Part 2: You can deepen your connection with your audiences by choosing the appropriate channels, format, and timing for communications. In the second table, there's space to consider these elements. Engagement and conversion metrics as well as social media analytics should inform your planning, when available.

AUDIENCE PROFILE:

Name of audience

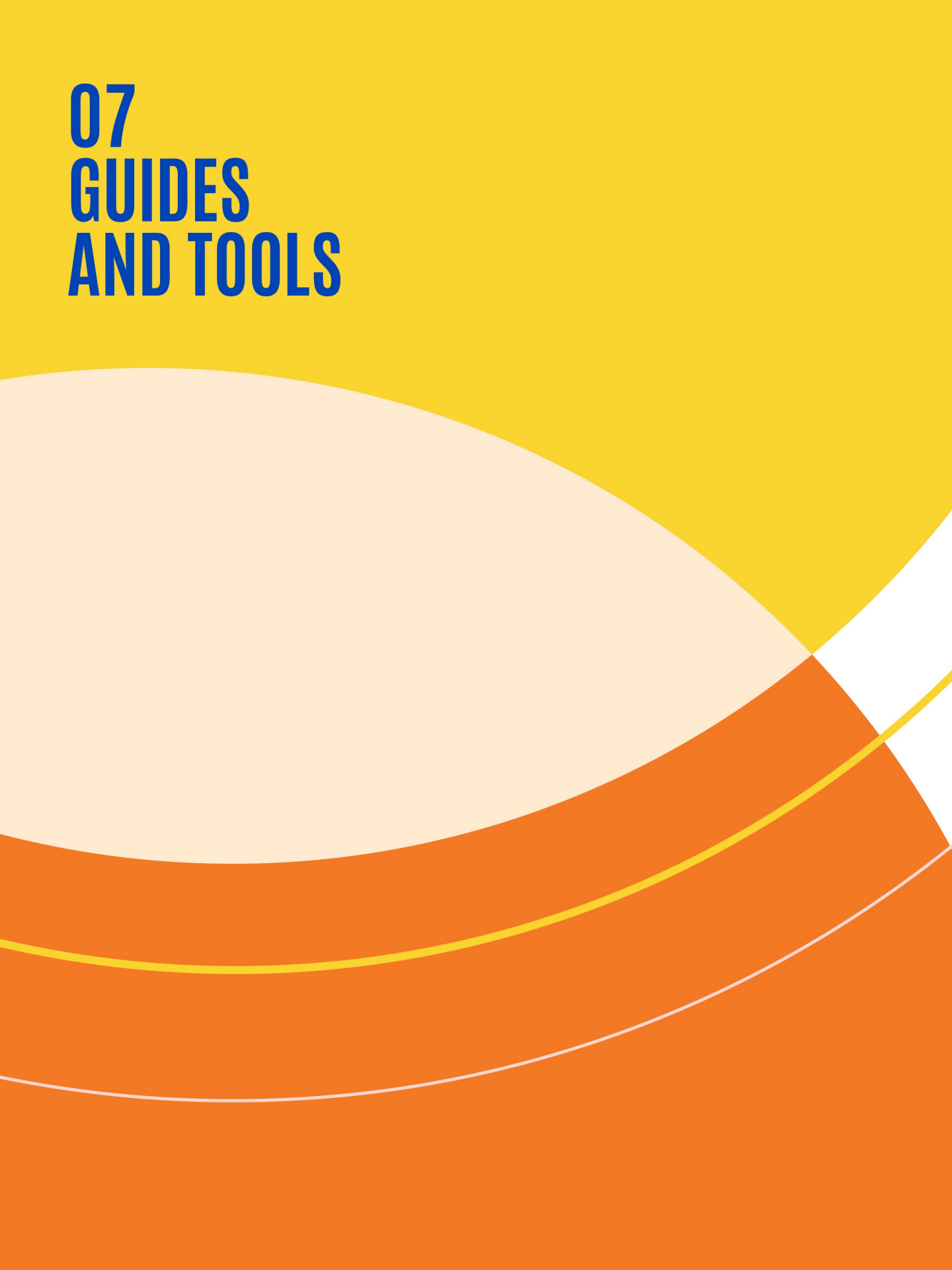
Who They Are	What Motivates Them to Engage	What Keeps Them From Engaging	What We'd Like Them To Do

Y

Name of audience

Y

07 GUIDES AND TOOLS

The background of the page is composed of large, overlapping curved shapes. A bright yellow shape occupies the top right corner. A large, light cream-colored shape curves from the left side towards the center. Below this, a wide band of orange color stretches across the bottom. A thin, bright yellow line curves through the orange band, and a thin white line also curves through it, creating a layered, abstract effect.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Below, you'll find a summary of United Way's global brand strategy and universal messaging. While the promise, pillars and personality are consistent across the global brand, universal messages should be tailored to reflect local context and impact. Refer to the What We Say section of this toolkit for guidance on how to localize.

Promise

United Way mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive.

Pillars

Connective, Responsive, Scalable

Personality

Engaging, Energizing, Elevating

Social Media One-Liner

From strengthening local resilience to advancing health, youth opportunity, and financial security, United Way is mobilizing communities to action so all can thrive.

Boilerplate

United Way mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive.

True to our founding spirit, whenever there is a need in our communities, United Way is there. We bring a comprehensive approach to every challenge, actively listening and responding to local needs. Our reach across tens of thousands of communities means we can share innovations and scale impact to improve lives around the world.

From strengthening local resilience to advancing health, youth opportunity, and financial security, we're working towards a future where every person in every community can reach their full potential.

To learn more, visit www.unitedway.org.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE (CONT'D)

Elevator Speech

United Way is a global nonprofit that mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive.

With deep local roots around the world, we see how our communities' greatest challenges are connected – and how we can bring people and resources together to address them.

That's why we're here, in our communities, always listening and ready to respond. Working together with our neighbors, we're strengthening local resilience and advancing health, youth opportunity, and financial security for all. With more than a thousand United Ways around the world, we share ideas and innovations to drive global impact.

Every day, our communities show that when people unite to take action, change is possible. Together, we're creating a future where everyone, everywhere can reach their full potential.

MESSAGING TIPS



Audience

The following questions can be a useful guide when creating tailored messages for a specific audience:

- Who are they?
 - What is their role in their communities? What is their past, current or potential relationship to United Way? How (if at all) has our relationship changed over time?
- What action(s) do we need them to take?
 - Given who they are, how can they engage with United Way to have a positive impact?
- What do they need to know?
 - What obstacles keep them from engaging with us? What information would help them overcome these obstacles?
- How should we connect?
 - Given what they need, how should we personalize our message and delivery to reach them most effectively?



Web

- Keep writing for digital short, between 100 and 400 words
- Remember that many of your readers will be using their mobile devices to access digital content
- Consider how images or infographics might help you tell your story
- Brainstorm words people might use to search for your webpage and try to work them into your writing

MESSAGING TIPS (CONT'D)



Video

- Match video length to your channel and format
 - 15 to 30 seconds (recorded vertically) is best for social media
 - 90 seconds to 3 minutes (recorded vertically or horizontally depending on platform) is best for showcases, podcasts, web. Ideally, a 30-second edit of the same content is created for use as a teaser, follow-up, or on other platforms
 - 3–5 minutes and longer should be reserved for special in-person events and specific/targeted digital strategies
 - Put the most important or interesting information at the beginning
- Add subtitles for accessibility and for social media
- If you're filming outside, be aware of wind and bright light. If there is wind, choose another time/location, if possible. If not, consider:
 - Recording video only, adding voiceover or text later
 - Using a wind muff to cover the microphone (whether using a standalone microphone or a cell phone/headphones)
- Keep your camera steady and level – use a tripod if you have one



Email

- Craft short, compelling subject lines to increase email open rates
- Use a clear and concise writing style in email content; avoid long blocks of text
- Include a prominent call to action (CTA) to guide recipients on the desired next steps
- Segment email lists for targeted and personalized communication

MESSAGING TIPS (CONT'D)



Social Media

- Engage with your audience by responding to comments and messages promptly
- Utilize hashtags strategically to increase the discoverability of your content
- Experiment with different types of content (images, videos, polls) to diversify your feed
- Examine social media analytics to understand audience preferences and optimize content strategy

GENERAL MESSAGING CHECKLIST

In all introductory messaging, our **promise** and **pillars** should be clearly communicated to clarify what we stand for, how we're different and how we make an impact.

Our personality is **engaging, energizing** and **elevating**. Though parts of our personality might be emphasized in certain contexts, we're always true to every aspect of who we are.

True to our promise, our communications **invite people to take action**. We should avoid positioning ourselves solely as a service provider or funding intermediary – and every piece of communication should have a clear call to action, such as join, give, volunteer, advocate.

- ☐ Clearly articulate the benefit and impact of offerings and initiatives.
- ☐ Use stories, testimonials, or examples to bring our words to life and make an emotional connection.
- ☐ For impact stories, lead with concrete, human narratives to drive audience engagement and connection. Use numbers selectively to illustrate how our impact is scalable.
- ☐ Remember to always include proof points (or reasons to believe) to support claims.
- ☐ Tailor your communications by audience, where appropriate.
- ☐ Show our impact through compelling design and engaging photography.
- ☐ Make sure we always represent ourselves as a nonprofit with a shared purpose.
- ☐ Where possible, avoid jargon and acronyms so that the language we use is understood by everyone without explanation.

ACTIVITY: WRITE A COMPELLING IMPACT STORY

- When we share our impact, we show what's possible and inspire more community members to take action.
- Language testing shows that general audiences connect deeply with concrete, personal examples of our impact, and are less moved by impressive but abstract numbers. So whenever possible, lead with a personal narrative and use numbers selectively to show how we scale our impact.
- Following a core storytelling structure helps ensure that our stories are aligned with brand strategy and immediately recognizable to audiences. Review the storytelling structure below and read the example. Then, use the space on the next page to write or rewrite an impact story for your United Way.
- We provide a storytelling structure below, which applies broadly to storytelling and should be adapted for various formats and channels.

1 - IMPACT STORY STRUCTURE

The Context

- Briefly introduce the protagonist and the challenges they face. The protagonist can be a single person, family or community, but should be individualized enough that the challenges described are specific, rather than sweeping and potentially inaccurate generalizations.

The Community

- Describe how the community came together with United Way to take action and build a solution or pathway forward. Action here should be framed as collective and collaborative – avoid framing United Way as a passive funder and avoid framing the story protagonist or their community as passive recipients of support.

The Change

- Describe the ultimate impact of community action; the doors that have opened for the protagonist today and in the future. When possible, selectively use numbers to show scale (e.g., how many others have similarly benefited from the same program or initiative).

ACTIVITY: WRITE A COMPELLING IMPACT STORY (CONT'D)

2 - IMPACT STORY EXAMPLE

See below for a short sample narrative following the basic structure – depending on the channel, format, and context, the length, level of detail, and language would be further adapted.

The Context

At 16, Bryanna had big goals: Do well in school and start serving her community as a veterinarian. But she also faced big hurdles: Living on her own meant she had to balance her desire to learn with the daily pressures of affording food and a safe space to sleep.

The Community

Through United Way's All In for Youth initiative, Bryanna connected with Brittany, a Success Coach trained to help young people navigate barriers to school completion. Tapping into the initiative's ecosystem of resources across Calgary's schools, government, corporations, agencies, and individuals, Brittany helped Bryanna secure housing, income and scholarships.

Together, these resources gave Bryanna the stability and confidence needed to graduate high school, enter college and pursue her dream of becoming a veterinary technician.

Reflecting on her journey, Bryanna shares, "I used to be really pessimistic about life, but I have learned that it does get better and asking for help isn't a sign of weakness. I'm proud of what I have accomplished, and how far I've come with a little support."

The Change

With a wide net of community support, Bryanna was able to focus her energy and initiative on building the foundation for a thriving future. Since its launch in 2012, All In for Youth has established 29,151 positive adult-youth connections and helped increase the percentage of young people completing high school on time by nearly 10%. That means many more young people advancing their goals like Bryanna – and a stronger community and economy for all of Calgary.

ACTIVITY: WRITE A COMPELLING IMPACT STORY (CONT'D)

3 - YOUR TURN

Based on the storytelling structure explainer and example, craft your own impact story in the space below.

The Context

The Community

The Change

GLOSSARY

Active Voice – Sentence where the subject of a verb carries out some action (e.g., “United Way mobilizes communities to action.”).

Audience – The specific group(s) of people you want to reach through communications.

Brand Personality – Captures an organization’s look and feel across expressions and experiences. It conveys the distinctive tone, manner and style in which we communicate and interact with others.

Brand Pillars – Capture an organization’s defining strengths.

Brand Promise – Crystallizes what an organization stands for, how it’s different or distinctive from peers, and why audiences should engage.

Framing – The presentation of ideas and principles to encourage one interpretation over another.

Jargon – Specialized language, often particular to an industry or organization.

Messaging – The crafting of clear, impactful language meant to drive reputation, awareness or action from specific audiences.

Passive Voice – Sentence where the subject is acted upon (e.g., “Through United Way, communities are mobilized to action.”). Avoid passive voice when possible.

Proof Points – Examples of impact that support a statement and help to establish credibility.

Tone – Manner in which speech or writing is expressed.

Touchpoints – All the programs, places and points of interaction where a brand is encountered.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Global Brand Strategy Hub on United Way Online

Provides brand strategy information including research, recorded webinars, and answers to frequently asked questions about United Way's Global Brand Strategy.

United Way Brand Guidelines

Coming in 2024 for United Ways that have completed all brand training and onboarding requirements. Provides an overview of the elements that make up our visual brand identity and the tools necessary to own and implement it with consistency.

United Way Worldwide Style Guide

Coming in 2024 for all United Ways. Provides guidance on language use, punctuation, grammar, formatting, and more, to reflect United Way's brand voice and ensure clarity and consistency in messaging.

Digital Content Library on United Way Online

Provides customizable, branded marketing assets and toolkits to help you elevate your United Way's impact and engage with the public.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Email brand@unitedway.org

