

# Call for Proposals

## 2025-26 Social Meals Enhancement Grant



United Way  
British Columbia

Working with communities in  
BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland,  
Central & Northern Vancouver Island

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Before applying for the Social Meals Enhancement Grant, **please review the following important information below:**

1. Existing Social Meals Enhancement Grant programs are **strongly encouraged** to re-apply for 2025-26 funding.
2. There are limited funds available for the Social Meals Enhancement Grant. Before applying, we encourage organizations to thoughtfully consider:
  - a. Where there is the highest need in community for this program;
  - b. The organization's ability to deliver quality programming across multiple Healthy Aging streams.
3. It is recommended that organizations apply for a maximum of two (2) Enhancement Grants **ONLY** ([see CORE BC posting for information about additional 2025-26 Enhancement Grant offerings](#)).

### BACKGROUND

Since 2012, United Way British Columbia has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Health to strengthen and grow the capacity of the community-based senior serving (CBSS) sector, to address the dynamic and growing needs of an aging population. At the heart of this work has been the Better at Home initiative, now in over 260 communities across BC, focused on supporting seniors to remain at home and stay connected to their communities. Responsive investments have also included the Higher Needs Demonstration Projects (Therapeutic Activation Programs for Seniors [TAPS], Social Prescribing [SPP], and Family and Friend Caregiver [FFCS] Programs), Navigation and Peer Support Programs [NPS], and the rapid mobilization of the Safe Seniors, Strong Communities [SSSC] funding during the COVID-19 pandemic. As needs have evolved, and our funding has responded, key learnings have been collected, documented, analyzed, and applied to ensure investments are meaningful at local, regional, and provincial levels. Through extensive consultation, three key messages have continued to emerge from stakeholders:

1. Use the social determinants of health as a framework to enhance/increase seniors' access to community-based services that supports aging in place, at home, in the community;
2. Increase the capacity of the CBSS sector; and
3. Strengthen collaboration within communities, the CBSS sector and with local government and the health system.

In 2023-24, a historic \$70M investment from the Government of BC provides United Way BC the opportunity to engage the CBSS sector to update and implement a new Healthy Aging Program and Service Model, in ways that are supported by community-based collaborative networks. This model will include updated approaches to existing models (Better, Better at Home; TAPS; FFCS), increased supports for communities (supporting funding access, data, information and referral, learning and quality assurance, supporting local community collaborative networks, volunteer management and health systems change expertise, etc.), and access to specific funding enhancements to address growing needs and/or test innovations.

In Fall 2023, United Way BC hosted consultation sessions across BC inviting feedback on the new service delivery design and model. Participants saw the new model as a positive step forward, while also offering recommended strategies to shape implementation of the three identified enhanced funding opportunities. As a result, in spring 2024, United Way BC offered the following Enhancement Grants:

- **Volunteer Coordination & Supports**
- **Aging in Motion: Transportation Supports & Innovations**
- **Social Meals**

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles that shape all three Enhancement Grants include:

- **Responsive and Flexible:** responding to the context of the collaborative network, including geography, demographics, available services, gaps/needs, opportunities, and readiness.
- **People-Centred, Seniors-Centred:** addressing the unique and diverse needs, priorities, and changing circumstances of those being served, as well as those offering the service (volunteers, staff). This includes consultation and planning on the development of the proposed work, as well as ongoing implementing, monitoring, and learning.

- **Collaborative and Connected:** illustrating how the work is a part of an ongoing community-based collaborative network that includes coordination and referral with other local services.
- **Innovative and Sustainable:** prioritizing services that address the community-based collaborative network's vision for sustainability (e.g. prioritizing and aligning with other services) and innovation (e.g. demonstration/testing of new approaches to support learning and explore efficacy).
- **Learning, Growth & Accountability:** highlighting the work as a part of a broader learning system, supported by United Way BC and the local community-based collaborative network. This systemic approach involves collaborative reflection, dialogue, documentation, and planning as a part of Learning & Evaluation (L&E) that is accountable to seniors, the community-based collaborative network, the broader community, and to the funder.

## FUNDING SUMMARY – SOCIAL MEALS

In 2025-26, United Way BC Healthy Aging is again releasing the Social Meals Enhancement Grant and invites organizations and partners within the Community-Based Seniors' Services (CBSS) sector to design and deliver services that **combine social engagement with the provision of nutritious meals, for community-dwelling seniors from priority populations.**

Aligning with the new Healthy Aging Program and Service Model priority population, this **one-year funding** will support local service delivery that is focused on increasing health equity by serving the following priority seniors' populations, particularly in areas with limited services and/or extensive need:

- Those with low to modest income;
- Those with low to moderate frailty;
- Those who are socially isolated/lonely; and/or
- Those who are a member of an underserved population, including Indigenous Elders, immigrant and ethnocultural minority, caregivers, 2SLGBTQIA+, persons living with a disability, and others.

Social Meals funding is an opportunity to either **enhance existing, or implement new, service delivery models that provide shared meals for (and with) seniors from priority population.** A secondary benefit is the opportunity for informal check-in on the health and well-being of isolated seniors (offering resources or referrals, as appropriate). Specific approaches must be responsive to the context of the local community/region, but examples could include:

- An existing drop-in program starts or continues to offer a hot lunch program to enhance/grow social connections;
- An existing home-based service (visiting, book or grocery drop-offs) adds a component where staff/volunteer takes and shares a meal with an isolated senior;
- A rural region implements a social meal service for vulnerable seniors in remote/isolated properties throughout a large geography; or
- A transportation (or accompaniment) service for medical appointments, includes a shared meal for driver and passenger(s).

Social Meals funded initiatives must be a **part of a Healthy Aging Community Collaborative**, ensuring proposed services respond to the priorities collaboratively identified, are coordinated with the services of other network members, and remain accountable through shared learning and reporting. Where those community-based collaborative networks do not yet exist, the work proposed must address how it will build relationships with others that offer CBSS (including health, municipalities/regional districts, First Nations) and work with United Way BC to initiate a meaningful collaborative structure. *'Community' and/or 'local' will be defined by the context of emerging and/or established service delivery patterns in the area and may reflect regional/sub-regional geographies.*

Social Meals funded initiatives will be required to actively engage in Learning & Evaluation (L&E) activities alongside United Way British Columbia Healthy Aging, as a part of ongoing learning and development related to the new service delivery model and specific funding enhancements. Details of this work will be developed into an L&E Plan and shared with the finalized funding agreement.

Examples of eligible expenses include the purchase of food, program supplies, staffing, volunteer stipends/honoraria, training/capacity building costs, facility rentals, as well as transportation associated with the program. Ineligible expenses include food or meal delivery that does not include a shared/social component, renovations, or capital expenditures.

Social Meals grants – ranging from \$10,000 - \$50,000 – are awarded on a **one-year term** to be expended by **March 31, 2026**. Applications will be accepted from **February 5 – March 7, 2025**, and will be awarded based on available funds and other factors. Late applications will not be accepted.

## NOTES:

- Existing Social Meals Enhancement Grant programs are encouraged to re-apply.
- Priority will be given to applications from communities where ‘food deserts’ are identified, in both rural and urban settings. A food desert is considered an area that lacks reasonable geographic access to healthy, culturally appropriate, and affordable food providers (retail, farmer’s markets, etc.).
- Applicants can only submit one application through the Social Meals stream, to either (a) enhance an existing program OR (b) design/implement a new service.

## CRITERIA FOR APPLYING

Organizations applying will:

- Be a qualified donee as stipulated in Canada Revenue Agency Guidelines. The term “qualified donee” as defined, includes registered charities, government bodies (i.e., municipalities) and certain other specific entities. First Nations Bands or other Aboriginal-based entities not considered a qualified donee must be recognized as a public service body performing a function of government in Canada.
  - If not a qualified donee (i.e. not registered a charity or other under the Income Tax Act), additional requirements will be necessary in accordance with the Canada Revenue Agency’s (CRA) revised oversight of the use of tax-assisted resources and the charitable sector’s need for accountability tools.
- Be based in British Columbia.
- Comply with all Federal, Provincial, and Municipal laws, including laws concerning labour, employment, and human rights standards.
- Demonstrate community accountability through strong volunteer governance and leadership.
- Demonstrate effective human resources, program, and fiscal management, and deliver programs and services in an effective and efficient manner.
- Review an Information Session that will accompany a package of supporting documents.

## CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL MEALS GRANT RECIPIENTS

- Signed Letter of Agreement (LOA)
- Funds will be used for the initiative as approved by United Way British Columbia.
- All funds received from United Way BC should be expended during the timeframe specified or returned.
- Written approval will be required from designated United Way BC staff prior to any funding, operational, and/or timeline changes to the original approved application.
- Work with United Way BC staff to develop at least one ‘impact story’ over the program period, as submitted in the required report(s). The story will highlight the direct and indirect linkages between the program and any positive impacts experienced by one or more participating older adults.
- Participate in ongoing Learning & Evaluation (L&E) activities that may include Communities of Practice (COPs) to standardize of tools, templates, and training modules. Details of this work will be developed into a L&E Plan and shared with the finalized funding agreement.
- Quarterly and Annual Reports will be submitted to United Way BC by the reporting deadlines (templates will be provided).

## TIMELINES

February 5, 2025	Enhancement Grant applications open
February 6, 2025	Enhancement Grant Information Session – register here: <a href="https://uwbc-ca.zoom.us/meeting/register/UNSqhejmRX2Jkn4SIGAuAw">https://uwbc-ca.zoom.us/meeting/register/UNSqhejmRX2Jkn4SIGAuAw</a> (must attend or watch recording)
March 7, 2025	Application deadline and review begins
Mid-March 2025	Successful and unsuccessful applicants notified
April 1, 2025	Letters of Agreement (LOAs) signed and returned, and funding released
July 31, 2025	Due: Quarterly Report: Period April 1 – June 30, 2025
October 31, 2025	Due: Quarterly Report: Period July 1 – September 30, 2025
January 30, 2026	Due: Quarterly Report: Period October 1 – December 31, 2025
May 8, 2026	Due: Final Annual Outcome Report: Period April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026