

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. What differences will I see in my local United Way after the merger?

For the most part, you'll see few changes. The same people will be doing the same work right in your community. Your local United Way may use its legacy name for some local activities such as local fundraising. Most of the change will come as we're able to use our merged organization to leverage existing resources, draw new resources and generate new ideas to make a bigger impact locally.

Q2. How will the leadership of the new United Way be structured?

There will be a regional governing board of directors made up of equal representation from the merging United Ways. Each community will also have a community leadership council that reports to the governing board to ensure regional knowledge and representation. There will be a CEO for the merged organization plus a local executive, selected from existing local staff, in each community.

Q3. Will the new United Way lay off local staff?

No. The merger isn't about cutting staff. We expect the merger to create new capabilities for greater impact locally and regionally.

Q4. Will local staff report to people outside of our community?

Local staff will continue to report to their current supervisors. Some reporting relationships may change over time.

Q5. Will the new United Way close the local office?

No. We're committed to keeping our local presence now and into the future.

Q6. What does "merger of equals" mean?

A lot of mergers involve a bigger partner swallowing a smaller one. That's not the case here. Each of our local United Ways enters into this merger as equals, with equal representation and equal say. That speaks to the importance of each United Way and its work.

Q7. How will you make sure my financial gift is invested locally?

Donations given locally will go to local programs and impact. That was the very first absolute agreement we made the moment we started exploring a merger. We'll give donors the option to invest in the bigger region if they wish, but the default will be to keep local gifts local.

Q8. Who will lead the new United Way?

The governing board of directors will select a CEO to oversee the newly merged United Way. Local executives will lead at the local level.

Q9. How will the merger affect local investments, partnerships and programs?

None of these will change in the near term. Over time, our hope is that our merged organization will be able to stabilize current resources and tap new resources to create even greater impact locally and regionally.

Q10. What will happen to local board members?

Some will serve on the governing board. Some will serve on the local leadership council, which helps advise the governing board on local needs.

Q11. Why aren't you changing the local United Way name?

The new organization's name is United Way of South Central Michigan. But we also realize that, when it comes to local fundraising and other hometown activities, the local name and brand is important to

each community. Some have had their local United Way around for a century! By keeping those names, we recognize their local legacy of impact while underscoring that this is truly a merger of equals.

Q12. What role will organized labor play in the merged United Way?

All three of our United Ways enjoy a strong, lasting partnership with Labor in our respective communities. It's vital that the relationship remain and grow. We've committed to having dedicated Governing Board seats, recruiting and engaging Labor in local and regional committees, and maintaining Labor Liaisons in each local office. Local employee units at Capital Area and Battle Creek will continue. We will consult and engage local Labor leaders and central Labor council regions in shaping our ongoing Labor strategy.

Q13. What will happen to your focus on racial equity?

Equity, diversity and inclusion are core values at all three of our United Ways. While some of us are farther along in that journey than others, the commitment is foundational for all. So let's be clear: That commitment will not diminish. The merger will not slow our progress; in fact, it will accelerate it for all of us.

Q14. How will diversity, equity, and inclusion affect board membership, leadership, and staff?

We're committed to intentionally increasing diversity at every level of the new United Way. We are currently exploring a leadership role that would be part of the merged organization (i.e. Chief Equity Officer) to ensure our work internally and externally is directly supported. We're also talking with our current vendors about how they can help us make sure our values of equity, diversity and inclusion are incorporated in Board, leadership, staff and development strategies as we move through merger and integration.

Q15. Have other United Ways merged in the past? How well did those go?

Two of our United Ways—Battle Creek/Kalamazoo, and Capital Area—have gone through mergers before. Both were successful in creating efficiencies, generating new ideas, and advancing local partnerships and impact. They also bring valuable lessons that will help as we integrate our three United Ways as smoothly as possible.

Q16. How will the local United Way work with its counterparts in other communities?

Our United Ways have a shared history of working well with each other and with other United Ways. For example, we've partnered with several local United Ways on a shared Human Resources model and support. We've also worked together on fundraising events, shared ideas across communities, and even led statewide campaign kickoffs.

Q17. What are your individual and corporate donors saying about this merger?

As part of our exploration of a merger, we met with a number of major donors and corporate partners in every community. The support for a merger has been overwhelming. They see the value in combining our strengths to create greater impact locally and beyond.

Q18. How will this merger affect the way I donated to United Way?

You'll see no change in how you give in the near term. Over time, we'll look to build on our existing tools to give you more flexibility than ever to support United Way.

Q19. How will this merger affect the way I volunteer to United Way?

You'll see no change in the near term. We hope to create even more opportunities to volunteer and be personally involved in our work.