



United Way Microgrants: Health Literacy

Overview

United Way continues a commitment to address community challenges with the announcement of this second microgrant, supported by Miller Electric Company. Based on results from community outreach and key findings from assessments, health was identified as a critical area for investment.

A startling **88%** of American adults are health illiterate, making it difficult for them to effectively follow medical treatments and engage in preventive healthcare (Milken Institute, 2022). Furthermore, the financial ramifications for health illiteracy on the U.S. health care system is estimated to cost **\$350 billion** per year, when adjusted for inflation to 2023 dollars using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI Inflation Calculator (Center for Health Care Strategies, 2024). Those with limited health literacy skills overwhelmingly experience adverse health outcomes and poorer access to health care. Studies show that patients without the proper health literacy skills face greater challenges in effectively navigating the health care system, leading to increased costs, greater use of acute and emergency care, and poorer health outcomes (Center for Health Care Strategies, 2024). Across Northeast Florida, life expectancy, infant mortality and some of the major causes of death (heart disease, colon cancer, breast cancer) serve as leading indicators to improve health literacy.

To understand some of the health literacy concerns in Northeast Florida, look closely at infant mortality. According to Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition's 2023 report, for our region, the infant mortality rate stood at **6.4** deaths for every **1,000** live births. Northeast Florida's infant mortality rate was higher than the state of Florida, which was **6.0**. Infant mortality rates by county were Baker **8.1** deaths; Clay **5.2** deaths; Duval **7.2** deaths; Nassau **4.8** deaths; St. Johns **3.6** deaths. Understanding the importance of prenatal checkups, the ability to quickly recognize signs and symptoms of illness in infants, the basics of infant care and safety in the home, and following guidelines for infant doctor visits all converge on health literacy and can contribute to reductions in infant mortality.

Life Expectancy in Duval County is also worth noting. According to the Florida Department of Health, Health Zone 1 (zip codes: 32202, 32204, 32206, 32208, 32209, 32254) has a life expectancy of 68.8 years. In contrast, Health Zone 6 (zip codes: 32228, 32233, 32250, 32266) has a life expectancy of **79.4 years**. Despite their close geographical proximity within the same county, these two health zones show an almost **11-year** difference in life expectancy (Florida Department of Health, 2016, 2024). Higher health literacy in Health Zone 6, among other critical factors, most likely contributes to higher life expectancy compared to Health Zone 1.

In light of the facts above, United Way is seeking grant proposals for health literacy programs focused on health zones with the highest concentration of need across Northeast Florida. We believe that improvements in health literacy within the health zones showing the greatest needs can result in better self-care, advanced community understanding, broader awareness of how to navigate the complex health care system, more accurate utilization of services, and better-informed health decisions. Enhanced health literacy can result in better health outcomes.



Further emphasizing health literacy programming, we note that a key need from the focus groups conducted as part of the 2023 Florida Department of Health Clay County Community Health Assessment were health education and knowledge. Examples of health education and knowledge listed were: lack of knowledge of health habits, lack of knowledge of proper utilization of health care services, and lack of knowledge and availability of health education programs (Florida Department of Health,2023).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines personal health literacy as ***the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health related decisions and actions for themselves and others.***

Health literacy is comprised of 4 major components:

1. **Access** - The ability to locate or receive health information or services.
2. **Understand** - The capacity to comprehend health information and services.
3. **Appraise** - The ability to evaluate the quality and relevance of health information and services.
4. **Use** - The capability to apply health information and services to make informed health decisions and take appropriate actions (World Health Organization).

Some examples of health literacy programs are:

- Health information campaigns
- Health learning series
- Health micro certifications

Values & Priorities

- United Way supports inventive, short term community responses from organizations striving toward community transformation.
- Collaboration with other organizations to pool power toward community solutions is an intentional part of our program.
- United Way builds meaningful relationships and trust with community-based organizations.
- United Way grows in experience on how to be a community focused grant maker.
- Creative program ideas presented by organizations are centered to serve the health literacy needs of the community.

Goal

The goal of the Health Literacy Microgrant is to improve health outcomes by addressing the critical issue of health literacy in the most at-risk communities across Northeast Florida. The hope is that enhancing health literacy will lead to better healthcare access, more informed health decisions, and improved overall community health



Eligibility & Requirements

- Organizations must operate in a county served by United Way of Northeast Florida - Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, or St. Johns.
- Organization is grassroots, faith, community-based or 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization in existence for a minimum of 2 years.
- Organization holds a positive reputation, trust, and credibility in the community.
- Organization has never received a multiyear grant from United Way.
- Organization has a clear history serving communities that are faced with critical health challenges.
- Organization has existing knowledge of and strategies to address health literacy.
- Organization has a robust and innovative plan, along with the capacity to lead a health literacy program over a short cycle (approximately 6-8 months) in Northeast Florida health zones most at risk.
- Organization is capable of implementing comprehensive measurements within the program to capture and demonstrate improvements in health literacy among participants.
- Organization has expertise in providing health focused programming.

Grant Timeline

- **February 13, 2025: Application Launches**
- **March 7, 2025: Application Closes**
- **April 11, 2025: Grant Awards Announced**
- **October 2025: Grant Program Closes**

Grant Funding

Organizations who submit winning proposals selected by United Way could receive up to \$10,000 in funding.

Proposals must clearly demonstrate how the funding proposed by the program would impact health literacy in Northeast Florida. Application requests should appropriately align to the capacity and experience of the organization.

Please use [THIS](#) direct link for the United Way Health Literacy Microgrant application. Be sure to scroll to the bottom of the page.

Organizations who wish to apply for this grant must set up an account in the United Way grant portal using the instructions below.

[CREATE AGENCY PROFILE](#)

How to Create Your Agency Profile

1. [Click on this link or the button above.](#)

2. Take a moment to review the brief video tutorials on the login page.



3. Click on “Create a New Account,” and set up your agency profile.

4. Once you have completed the agency profile, you are finished. When a grant application is released, it will show up on the dashboard. You can then complete the application and submit.

United Way Applicant Assistance

United Way will offer opportunities before application submission to answer questions and provide guidance to organizations interested in this opportunity. Knowing target organizations for this grant may be smaller, lack major capacity, and have limited experience with grant processes, we are positioning ourselves to remove barriers to demonstrate the value of a deeper community focus in our grantmaking.

To request assistance or directly ask questions as you prepare to submit your application, please email unitedwaygrants@uwnefl.org.