



## SVI Mental Health and Social Connections

### Grant Guidelines 2026-27

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## Introduction

United Way BC (UWBC) invests in people and communities so that everyone can live with stability, dignity, and connection, particularly during periods of vulnerability or transition.

The **Mental health and Social Connections** grant provides funding to strengthen mental health, improve individual and family resilience, enhance culturally safe supports, and reduce barriers for people to access essential services across Southern Vancouver Island and the Southern Gulf Islands.

This funding focuses on individuals and families experiencing complex situations and barriers, including children, youth, seniors, newcomers, racialized communities, people experiencing poverty, people with disabilities, and others facing colonial or systemic inequities on Southern Vancouver Island and the Southern Gulf Islands.

## Expected Outcomes

Funded programs will improve people's ability to access and navigate community resources, while developing meaningful and supportive social connections in one or more of the following areas:

### **Improved Mental Health & Wellbeing**

- Increased emotional resilience and coping skills
- Reduced distress, fewer crisis events, and less isolation

### **Improved Resilience and Stability**

- Increased ability to handle everyday stress and adapt to life challenges
- Home environments feel secure, and relationships are healthier and more supportive

### • **Improved Ability to Access and Navigate Services**

- Successful referrals and service completions
- Reduced wait times and fewer barriers to supports

### **Improved Social & Cultural Connection**

- Increased participation in culturally safe and community-rooted supports
- Strengthened sense of belonging and trust in services

### **Culturally Safe, Accessible Services**

- Mobile, rural, and island-based access
- Indigenous led supports
- Supports for newcomers, refugees, and racialized communities.

## **Eligible Activities include:**

### **1. Individual Supports**

Programs and Services focused on one-to-one support that builds personal wellbeing, stability, and confidence navigating services.

- Trauma-informed counselling
- System navigation or case management
- Navigation and referral supports that build confidence in accessing services

### **2. Group Programs**

Group, peer, and community-based programs that strengthen social connection, cultural wellness, and collective wellbeing.

- Healing circles, land-based or cultural wellness activities
- Community-based mental wellness programs
- Programs that reduce isolation, including drop-in and social support groups
- Peer support and outreach programs

## **Funding prioritizes:**

Individuals and families facing barriers related to:

- Low income or poverty
- Disabilities or complex conditions
- Mental health or substance use challenges
- Trauma, violence, or crisis
- Newcomer, refugee, or racialized community experiences
- Colonial harm, systemic racism, or discrimination
- Rural and island isolation
- Age related vulnerabilities (youth in transition, isolated seniors, caregivers)

## Example of eligible projects:

- Community drop-in, outreach and peer support programs
  - Counselling and support for children and youth as they transition through life stages
  - Access to basic needs such as hygiene products, clothing, food, and emergency supplies
  - Free and confidential referrals and navigation of supports
  - Programs for newcomers and refugee families
  - Wrap around supports and case management
  - Culturally safe healing circles and land-based wellness programs
  - Rural and island initiatives connecting people to essential services
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## Funding Range

- Up to \$60,000
- Partial funding may be awarded

## Eligibility Criteria

### 1. Eligible Applicants

To apply, organizations must:

- Be located and operating within the Southern Vancouver Island or Southern Gulf Islands region
- Be registered as one of the following:
  - Federally registered charity or qualified donee or,
  - BC non-profit society or,
  - Indigenous-led or Indigenous-governed organization.
- Hold general liability insurance
- Be compliant with WorkSafeBC (if applicable)
- Adhere to public health orders and safe operating standards

### 2. Ineligible Applicants

- For-profit businesses or subsidiaries
- Social enterprise, cooperatives or B-Corps
- Individuals or unincorporated groups

- Organizations operating outside BC

### **3. Ineligible Activities**

- Admin over 10%
- Partisan or political activities
- Religious instruction or worship
- Capital projects not essential to service delivery
- Activities outside the scope of mental wellness, stability, or social connection

## **Key Dates & Reporting**

- Funding Call Open: February 23, 2026
- Funding Call Closes: March 23, 2026
- Amounts announced and awarded: April 2026
- Interim check-in: Fall 2026
- Final Reporting: April 2027

Additional information that may be requested during this funding :

- Social media presence (see UWBC guidelines)
- Client feedback and/or stories of change