



UNITED WAY CHAMPIONS
Local solutions. Lasting impact.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

YOUR INVESTMENT AT WORK



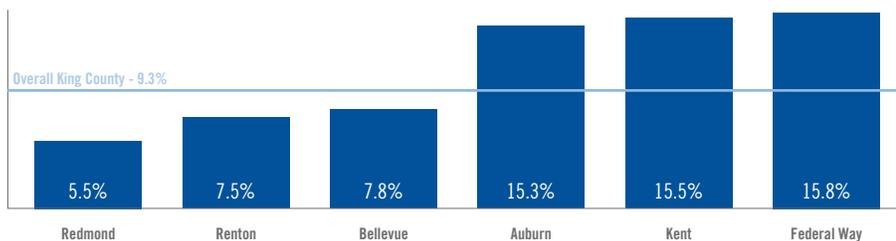
FALL 2019

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Your commitment to helping break the cycle of poverty is an important one. In this period of record growth in King County, housing costs have outpaced incomes and many families are being left behind. These are the primary indicators currently driving United Way investments:

- **9.3% of King County residents are living in poverty.** While that number has gone down in recent years, it is still nearly 1 out of 10 people struggling to make ends meet. Many people are working full-time and still earning less than \$25,750 per year—the [federal poverty level](#) for a family of four.
- **People of color are experiencing poverty at an even higher rate.** The disparities are stark. Overall, one in ten people in King County are living below the poverty line, but those numbers change dramatically for people of color: more than 25% of African Americans and more than 20% of Native Americans are living in poverty.
- **Income inequality persists.** The [Gini index](#) measures wealth distribution across a population, with zero representing total equality and 1 representing total inequality, where all wealth is concentrated in a single household. The indicator has been rising steadily during the past several decades. When the Census Bureau began studying income inequality more than 50 years ago, the Gini index was 0.397. In 2018, the Gini index rose to 0.485 nation-wide; .45 for the Seattle-Bellevue-Tacoma region. (By comparison, no European country had a Gini index greater than 0.38 between 2017 and 2018.)

Poverty rates for cities in King County



[Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey](#)

PROGRESS MADE THIS YEAR

Your support has allowed us to design a highly effective model of connecting low-income people to tax credits, income, public benefits and savings opportunities. As the local experts in the region, United Way has scaled the model to help 35,000 people access food and income each year through our Free Tax Prep Campaign, Fuel Your Future program, Poverty Solutions grants and Bridge to Finish.

Each year we unlock \$40 million of public dollars that would otherwise be left on the table. We do this by investing donor dollars and partnering with 50 organizations, 200 AmeriCorps members and 1,300 volunteers.

Fuel Your Future: Breakfast After the Bell is being implemented statewide

In King County, nearly 1 in 6 kids struggles with hunger. While we've succeeded in enrolling 100,000 low-income kids in the federal Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program, there are other federal programs that could benefit these kids. Compared to other parts of the country, our participation rates are low, which means that many kids aren't accessing the food they need and millions of taxpayer funds are left on the table.

Barriers to program participation include awareness, stigma, culturally appropriate food, and transportation. United Way is tackling these barriers every day to ensure that all kids have access to healthy meals.

United Way launched Fuel Your Future in 2015 to break the cycle of poverty by transforming schools and communities to help reduce childhood hunger. This program uses AmeriCorps staffing, grant resources, and technical assistance to implement Breakfast After the Bell in schools, launch afterschool supper programs in schools and community organizations, and provide nutrition education to students.

Your investment allowed us to pilot Breakfast After the Bell in King County and take the lead on legislative efforts. Because of you, more kids in high-need schools are having breakfast served after the bell and starting their day with full bellies, ready to learn. With successful legislation passed in March 2018, United Way has been tapped to lead the implementation statewide.

As of October 2019, dozens of schools have fully implemented Breakfast After the Bell. The goal—and mandate from the legislation—is that more than 300 schools statewide will be in compliance by the end of the school year. The program includes a racial equity audit of how all students are being served.

Census 2020 awareness campaign

In 2020, for the first time, the Census Bureau will use online reporting as the primary mode of capturing information. Resource-intensive canvassing, training and non-response follow-up is being replaced with the backend technology solutions.

We know that accurate counting of our most vulnerable populations is a must in order to capture federal and state funding. Missed households in the 2020 Census will affect the ability to support children, veterans, senior citizens and middle- and low-income families. An accurate count of Washington’s communities will ensure the fair distribution of taxpayers’ funds and political representation.

United Way received an \$850K grant to help get the word out and ensure the most accurate Census possible. We received this grant because your donations have made it possible that we already are on-the-ground serving these vulnerable populations. We will connect with clients through the Free Tax Prep Campaign, Community and Family Resource Exchange events serving people who are homeless and on campuses with a high number of low-income college students.

\$5.8M

Potential loss of federal funds for every 100 households missed in the 2020 Census count

Free Tax Prep Program: helping more undocumented workers file and pay taxes

When tax time comes around, thousands of hard-working people in King County face age, income, language or disability barriers. Many are eligible for tax credits and refunds that could put them on a path to financial stability, but few can afford professional tax services to figure it all out. The Free Tax Prep Program is a direct solution to this problem and ensures that people who are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit—one of the most recognized anti-poverty tools available—are able to keep more of what they earn.

With your support, we prepared tax returns for nearly 22,000 low-income people across the county. Despite fear among undocumented workers, we developed community based partnerships and expanded the number of returns for this group by helping them get ITINS. The result is more taxes paid—and more people maximizing their returns, learning about savings opportunities and being connected to other valuable services. We will leverage this county-wide coverage to increase awareness and minimize concerns about the new online Census approach.

Free Tax Preparation Program 2019 results:

• 21,975 tax returns	• 1,030 volunteers
• \$30.1M in tax refunds for clients	• \$8.1M from the Earned Income Tax Credit

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Summer meals have plateaued. Over the summer, more than 561,000 federally funded meals were served. The goal of this program is to reach families in the summer who rely on free and reduced lunch during the school year. This additional help can be the difference between having to choose paying rent or feeding your family.

The number of meals served has plateaued over the last two years. Where we see the highest take-up rate is in the city of Seattle, where meal sites are concentrated. In other parts of the county, where it's often more difficult to access sites, the take-up rate is lower. While a site may be close to an apartment complex on paper, having to cross a busy highway can make all the difference. We are working to improve the program with:

- More concentrated sites
- Better food
- Changing public policy so families have more money over the summer to purchase food.

Breakfast After the Bell is a tough sell at many schools. The intent behind offering breakfast to all students after the school day begins is to provide stigma-free nutrition and create a more level learning environment. Despite the recent legislation, the decades-old model of creating a different experience for low-income kids has proven a tough habit to break. Many schools are continuing with more traditional breakfasts, only serving kids who are late, resulting in a program that is not delivered in the same way to students.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR CONFIDENCE IN UNITED WAY

Scale. Having teams on-the-ground positions us to help even more people. Through the county-wide tax sites, we're connecting people to additional services like our college completion efforts and the new Census awareness campaign.

Leverage. United Way of King County deploys more AmeriCorps members than almost any other nonprofit in the state—more than 200 last year. This is a federally funded resource that puts boots on the ground in schools, parks and other service areas to connect low-income people to resources.

Influence. Your support enables us to have a seat at the table, influencing policy. We are hard at work this year to protect low-income families. We're fighting for the Working Families Tax Credit, which mitigates the effects of Washington's regressive tax structure.



WE COULD NOT DO IT WITHOUT YOU

It's clear that without your support, our community would not be as strong:

- **More people would be living in poverty.** Overall, poverty in King County has declined by 50,612 people since its peak in 2013.
- **More low-income kids would go without breakfast.** More than 2,000 students receive breakfast and after-school suppers each day because of your support.
- **More students are completing college.** In the pilot phase, 4,000 students on college campuses have been served by Bridge to Finish. We're working with the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to capture and report on college completion rates as we grow the program.

Thank you for your commitment to this important work!