



## 2026-2027 BARRIER BUSTERS PROGRAM GUIDELINES

- The Barrier Busters Program is intended to provide financial assistance to qualified clients to help eliminate barriers they encounter as they work to build pathways out of poverty to self-sufficiency. **It is not an emergency-assistance program.**
- The program is owned and administered by United Way of Lee County. Program partners include local direct-service agencies.
- Program dates are September 1, 2026 through August 31, 2027.
- Partner agencies will screen clients for services and will provide financial assistance to those who qualify.
- Clients must sign Release of Information (ROI) in order to participate in the program. Partner agency may use its own ROI form or a form provided by UWLC. The agency is required to keep ROI forms on file; they do not need to be submitted with monthly report.
- Agency will draw against a set amount available on a first-come, first-served basis. The UWLC Board of Directors will allocate funds for the Barrier Busters program for the 2026-27 program year. This amount will be determined before the beginning of the program year.
- The maximum reimbursable amount per client/household per month is \$750.00.
- When the remaining available amount reaches \$4,000.00, UWLC will notify agencies. **From that point on through the end of the program year, any Barrier Busters expenditures must be pre-approved in order to guarantee reimbursement.**
- When all funds are exhausted for the program year, agencies will be notified and no further reimbursements will be made.
- Prepaid expenses will not be reimbursed.
- Partners will submit monthly requests for reimbursement to UWLC using a form that UWLC provides—form will include place for client name, date provided, amount provided, and item(s) provided. **Report is due by 5:00 p.m. on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month for the previous month's expenses** (or the next business day if the 10<sup>th</sup> is on a weekend or holiday); payment will be made by electronic funds transfer to agency. **If reports are not submitted by the deadline, payment is not guaranteed. Expenses from prior months turned in on current month's report will not be paid.**
- In addition to the monthly reimbursement report, partner agency will submit two impact reports. The first report is due in March 2027, and the second is due September 30, 2027 (one month after the program year end). United Way will provide an online form to submit reports.
- Financial assistance for clients will be paid directly to vendor by agency, not to client.
- It is expected that agencies will serve as many clients as possible with available funds. Agencies may use their discretion as to whether to help a client more than once (as noted above, the maximum amount per client/household per month is \$750.00. However, it is expected that agencies will administer the program equitably. Agencies that do not fulfill these expectations are subject to review by UWLC and possible termination from the program.

- UWLC has sole discretion to approve or disapprove expenditures. Eligible services not needing preapproval include the following:
  - Rental deposit/first month's rent/utility deposit
  - Past-due bill payment to clear up credit report and/or rental history (reasonable amount) **for clients actively seeking housing.** NOTE: Past-due bill payments are not approved for any other reason(s).
  - Payment of outstanding eviction costs to clear up rental history (reasonable amount)
  - Pet deposit (for rental)
  - Credit-check fee
  - Background-check fee (housing-related)
  - Fee to have ID made (including copy of birth certificate)
  - Fee for work-related certification
  - Purchase of work uniform (including required safety equipment)
  - Fee for class needed for employment or employment eligibility; limited assistance with books/supplies if not covered by other programs
  - Limited transportation assistance to work, school, or medical appointments. (Transportation to an out-of-area shelter when no in-area shelter is available will be considered on a case-by-case basis; contact United Way Executive Director for preapproval.)
  - Limited/minor repair of personal vehicle to enable client to get to work or school
- Other expenditures identified by service providers may be eligible; email UWLC Executive Director for preapproval.
- Hotel/motel expenses are not normally eligible for Barrier Busters reimbursement, though they may be approved under certain limited circumstances. Contact UWLC Executive Director for more information and preapproval.
- Partners will sign a Memorandum of Agreement with United Way of Lee County to participate in the program.
- These guidelines are subject to amendment and revision.