



# THE EQUITY INNOVATION FUND



## Equity Innovation Report 6



**UNITED WAY**  
Racine County



# Equity Innovation Report 6 Grantees

Payne Consulting  
Project: Next Level Mentoring Program

Racine Friendship Clubhouse  
Project: Digital Literacy Education Lab

Women's Resource Center, Inc.  
Project: Legal Advocacy Services



3 projects totaling over \$126,000.

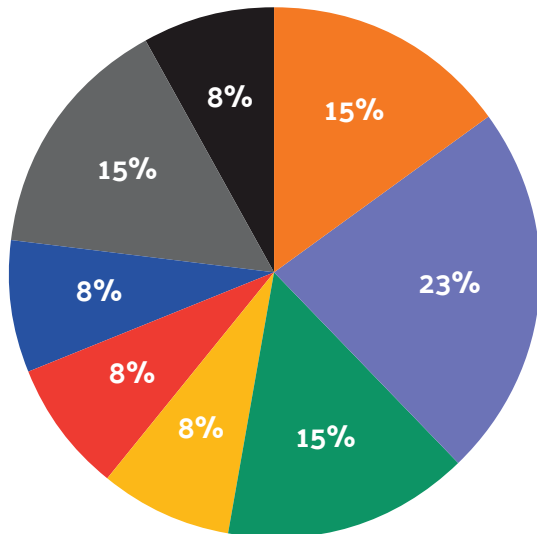


789 individuals served.



3 projects are directed by BIPOC, women, LGBTQIA+ community members or other marginalized individuals.

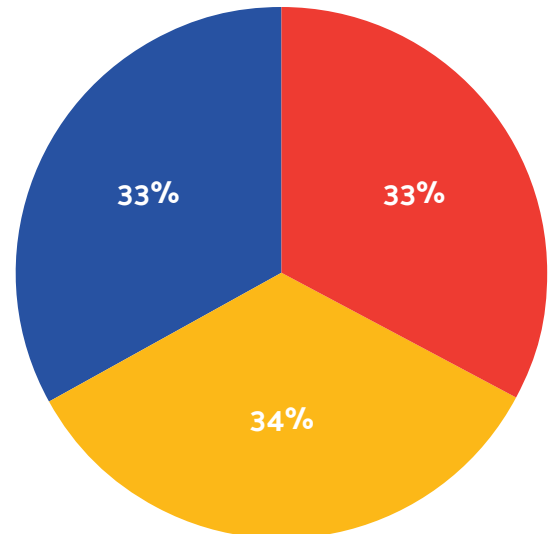
Marginalized Populations Served by Projects



- African American
- Individuals with cognitive or physical differences
- LGBTQIA+
- People of color
- Adults with mental health illness
- Women
- Veterans
- Latinx/Hispanic

Grantees indicated in their application which marginalized population their projects will serve. Projects may serve more than one population.

Areas Addressed by Projects



- Individual independence
- Individual and/or family stability
- K-12 academic and/or social emotional success

Grantees indicated in their application the focus area addressed by their project. Projects may address more than one focus area.



**PAYNE**  
CONSULTING

## Payne Consulting Project: Next Level Mentoring Program

Following successful program delivery supported by an Equity Innovation Fund grant in 2023, Payne Consulting was awarded a second grant to continue the impact the program has on its participants. Next Level Mentoring Program is an afterschool initiative for at-risk youth in the City of Racine. This comprehensive, curriculum-based program focuses on leadership and character development, recreational activities and career exploration.

The program aims to foster meaningful connections between mentees and diverse community members who can relate to their experiences, reducing truancy and high-risk behaviors. Additionally, it seeks to enhance academic leadership, create positive educational experiences and improve life outcomes. Through boxing and other activities, the program also provides a healthy outlet for self-expression while boosting self-confidence.

The mentoring sessions covered a variety of topics including:

- **Boxing** – Fundamentals such as foot movement, jabs, and punches, along with lessons on discipline, consistency and self-care.
- **Leadership & Character Development** – Goal-setting, honesty, responsibility, humility, personal health and compassion.
- **Technology** – Keyboarding, developing and presenting PowerPoint slides, cyber safety and cyberbullying prevention.

With a strong emphasis on building resilience and self-discipline, the program equips youth with the tools to overcome challenges and develop essential life skills.



### By the Numbers

- 32 youth served
- 41 mentoring sessions completed
- 79% of participants maintained or increased social skills
- 83% of participants maintained or increased leadership skills



“This program changes the lives of young people by connecting them with mentors who care about their growth, development and well-being. It was a blessing seeing the smiles on the faces of the mentees as they connected with their mentors, saw their friends, learned new skills and experienced technology like the VR headset for the first time or tasted new food during dinner.”

– Dr. Kimberly Payne, owner and founder of Payne Consulting





## Racine Friendship Clubhouse Project: Digital Literacy Education Lab

Racine Friendship Clubhouse used Equity Innovation Funds to install a digital literacy lab, providing members with valuable opportunities to learn and develop essential digital skills. This lab has enabled members to improve their computer proficiency, participate in vocational classes and workshops, conduct job searches, prepare resumes and cover letters and gain fundamental digital skills necessary for various computer and electronic tasks.

In addition, the organization was able to update key aspects of its Work-Ordered Day program, expanding skill-building opportunities for members. These updates included transitioning from paper sign-ins to a digital check-in system, along with other improvements that have enhanced the program's efficiency and effectiveness.

Members successfully mastered the new phone system, learning to answer calls, place callers on hold, transfer calls, and retrieve voicemails independently. They also utilized newly installed TVs for presentations and program activities. Laptops have become an essential tool, allowing members to make online purchases and enter data efficiently.

During the funding period, members also began setting and working toward personal digital literacy goals. These goals include improving typing skills, navigating the internet, setting up and checking email accounts and effectively using cell phones.

### By the Numbers

- 52 participants served
- 32 classes conducted
- 91% of participants can now use tablets, TVs and laptops with little to no assistance
- 64% increase in members who consider themselves advanced at using technology after participating in classes
- 85% of members report no longer seeing themselves as beginners after participating in classes



“We are very proud of our members for their progress in their comfort and abilities. We are also very proud of their ability to change their habits and patterns of behavior to include the new technology. They have come a long way and now they are so comfortable with the technology that if we took it away, they would struggle. They have realized how easy it makes their lives and our program.”

– Kati Rognsvoog, Program Director, Racine Friendship Clubhouse





## Women's Resource Center, Inc Project: Legal Advocacy Services

Women's Resource Center's (WRC) Legal Advocacy Services project provides critical support to victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other forms of interpersonal violence, offering consultation on a variety of legal matters. Services include assisting clients in obtaining restraining orders, securing child support and benefits, resolving custody disputes, reinstating driver's licenses, preparing for testimony, providing trauma-informed care, safety planning and completing legal documents.

The project was first funded through the Equity Innovation Fund in 2022 with a goal of serving 250 individuals. At the end of the funding period, they exceeded that goal by 38%. The success led to the



project being awarded a second grant, with a goal of serving 500. This goal was exceeded by nearly 41% with the program serving over 700 individuals.



### By the Numbers

- 491 individuals obtained or began the process of obtaining a restraining order
- 232 individuals started the process of obtaining child support
- 291 individuals started the process or resolving custody disputes
- 90% of participants report having a better understanding of resources in the community after receiving services

“Equity funding allowed WRC to serve 704 individuals through our Legal Advocacy program, this is the highest number of individuals served in one program in a year's time in my time at WRC.” – Jori Chambers, Executive Director, Women's Resource Center



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“My experience of the Equity Innovation Fund (EIF) committee has been rewarding. Watching community organizations continue to provide much needed services in our Racine community is worthwhile the time of being on the committee.”  
Dr. Arletta Perry, Equity Innovation Fund Committee member

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From its launch in January 2022 to the completion of the grants included in this report, United Way of Racine County’s Equity Innovation Fund has awarded 28 grants to organizations, totaling more than \$1,340,000. Over 4,100 people have been served by the projects supported by the Equity Innovation Fund.

Future Equity Innovation Fund reports will detail the impact of grants that have been awarded in subsequent rounds of funding.

United Way of Racine County’s Equity Innovation Fund supports projects, programs and solutions that use innovative strategies to reduce disparities, improve outcomes and empower members of historically marginalized populations. The fund is made possible through the generosity of novelist and philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, and through support from Racine County.



## ▶ Stay Up to Date

If you have any questions about the Equity Innovation Fund, please contact Special Projects Manager Katie Tuttle at [ktuttle@unitedwayracine.org](mailto:ktuttle@unitedwayracine.org)

To learn more, and to see other Equity Innovation Fund reports, scan the QR code or visit: [UnitedWayRacine.org/EIF](https://UnitedWayRacine.org/EIF)

