

UNITED WAY OF BEMIDJI AREA
Request for Proposals
Disaster Case Management Services

Issued by: United Way of Bemidji Area

Proposals due: September 25, 2026 by 4:00pm

Contract term: October 15, 2026 - March 31, 2027, with the intent to move to a retainer agreement April 1, 2027

Submit to: Denae Alamano, Executive Director, director@unitedwaybemidji.org

Purpose

United Way of Bemidji Area seeks proposals from qualified individuals, businesses, or organizations to provide disaster case management services for households still recovering from the June 21, 2025 derecho windstorm, and to build the local capacity to respond when the next disaster hits.

For purposes of this RFP, an individual respondent must be operating as an independent contractor, sole proprietor, or other legally authorized business able to contract with United Way of Bemidji Area. Individual respondents must be properly licensed or registered to conduct business as applicable, must carry or be able to obtain required insurance coverage before contract execution, and must be responsible for their own taxes, benefits, equipment, transportation, and business expenses unless otherwise negotiated in the contract.

We are looking for a partner who will train with us, learn our systems, sit at the table with our Long Term Storm Recovery Committee for the next 6 months, and be the first call when the next crisis comes. The selected respondent will also be a part of the Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) structure we will be building for our area.

About United Way of Bemidji Area

United Way of Bemidji Area unites people and organizations to maximize donor impact across Beltrami, Clearwater and Hubbard counties. We fundraise, mobilize volunteers, manage community resources, build initiatives to solve community issues, and serve as a hub connecting needs to resources. Our work is organized around Healthy Community, Youth Opportunity, Financial Security and Community Resiliency.

Much of our work centers on ALICE households, those who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. These are neighbors who work, often at more than one job, and still cannot absorb an unexpected loss. When a disaster strikes, ALICE households have the least cushion and the longest road back.

Background on the Storm and Our Recovery Work

On June 21, 2025, a derecho windstorm caused widespread damage across our service area. Hundreds of households were affected, many of them ALICE households and older adults without the resources or physical ability to recover on their own. Volunteers cleared debris, ran chainsaw crews and repaired homes. The community came together, and that collaboration is the reason recovery has moved as far as it has.

United Way of Bemidji Area convened the Long Term Storm Recovery Committee and hired a full time Disaster Case Manager to serve impacted households. As that position transitions, we are seeking a contracted partner to carry the remaining recovery caseload and to become the standing disaster case management capacity for our area.

While ~100 household remain in active or pending case management, the contractor will be responsible for moving as many of them as possible to close in the six-month timeframe, with the understanding that cost, weather, time, etc. will mean that not all cases will be closed.

How We Define Crisis

A crisis is not always a windstorm. United Way of Bemidji Area has stepped into this role more than once, and the next one may look nothing like the last. During the COVID pandemic, we coordinated resources, connected people to what they needed and raised funds to keep those connections working. When an apartment building housing elderly and disabled residents gave short notice to vacate over a holiday weekend, we raised funds, housed residents in a hotel until permanent housing was secured, made sure they were fed, and provided case management throughout the transition.

The June 21, 2025 derecho was the largest of these, not the only one. The selected respondent should know that they may be called to respond to a sudden loss of housing, a mass displacement, a public health emergency, an infrastructure or utility failure, or any event that puts a group of neighbors in crisis at the same time. Judgment, flexibility and the willingness to move fast matter as much as disaster specific training.

Scope of Services

The selected respondent will provide the following services during the initial contract term.

Disaster Case Management

- Serve as the point of contact for disaster impacted individuals and families and connect them to resources in a timely and efficient manner.
- Conduct assessments of client needs, as well as other needs including housing, income, health, etc.
- Develop and maintain recovery priorities with each household, tracking progress toward case closure.
- Assist clients in connecting to disaster relief programs, state and federal assistance and community resources.
- Provide referrals to appropriate service providers and follow up to confirm connection.
- Maintain accurate and confidential client case files, documentation and reporting in the systems designated by United Way of Bemidji Area.
- Present unmet needs to the Long Term Storm Recovery (LTSR) Committee for funding consideration as needed.
- Track service outcomes and community impact and submit monthly reports to the LTSR Committee.
- Coordinate and support volunteer groups engaged in disaster recovery work.

Readiness and Integration

- Complete disaster case management training as directed, including FEMA independent study courses and Minnesota VOAD or national partner training as available.
- Job shadow United Way of Bemidji Area staff to learn our intake, referral, and documentation processes.
- Serve as an active member of the Long Term Storm Recovery Committee, including attending monthly meetings.
- Participate in the formation of a regional Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD), contributing to structure, protocols and partner recruitment.
- Help develop and document disaster preparedness, mitigation and resiliency plans so the region is ready for the next activation.

Future Crisis Activation

Beginning April 1, 2027, United Way of Bemidji Area may negotiate a retainer agreement with the selected respondent so that disaster case management services can be activated quickly when a disaster or other community crisis affects

our region. A retainer would help keep a trained, connected partner ready before the next event rather than after it. Respondents should describe their expected response time, capacity to scale, and any conditions on availability. Any retainer, activation terms, and rates would be negotiated separately and are not guaranteed through this RFP.

Service Area

The initial contract covers Beltrami County. United Way of Bemidji Area also serves Clearwater and Hubbard counties and welcomes conversation with respondents about extending coverage to those counties in the future. Red Lake Nation and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe are essential partners in this work and respondents should be prepared to coordinate respectfully with tribal programs and leadership.

Term, Funding and Compensation

The initial term is October 15, 2026 through March 31, 2027. United Way of Bemidji Area has secured funding for the initial phase of this work. United Way of Bemidji Area will serve as the contracting entity and will manage the selected respondent. Funding beyond the initial term is not yet secured and may come through United Way of Bemidji Area, grant funding, philanthropic partners, or disaster-specific funds raised at the time of an event.

We estimate the work at approximately 20 hours per week from October 15 through December 31, 2026, when active case management and training are heaviest, and 3 to 5 hours per week from January 1 through March 31, 2027, as cases close and the focus shifts to readiness, committee work and COAD planning. These are estimates, not guarantees. Respondents may propose a different level of effort if their approach calls for it.

Respondents should propose their own compensation structure. Please include:

- Proposed hourly rate, monthly flat fee, or combination, with a clear explanation of what is included.
- Estimated hours for each phase of the initial term and the assumptions behind that estimate.
- A total not to exceed amount for the full contract term.
- Any costs billed separately, such as mileage, phone, software or training fees.
- Proposed retainer structure beginning April 1, 2027, and proposed rates for crisis activation.

United Way of Bemidji Area reserves the right to negotiate scope and compensation with any respondent, and to award a contract for less than the full scope described here. Payment will be made only under a fully executed written agreement and based on approved invoices and satisfactory submission of required documentation, including time tracking, client tracking, case documentation, and other reports required by United Way of Bemidji Area.

This RFP does not guarantee a contract award, a minimum number of hours, a specific payment amount, or future funding beyond the initial written agreement.

Expected Deliverables

The selected respondent will be expected to provide consistent documentation, reporting, and communication so United Way of Bemidji Area can monitor client progress, manage grant requirements, support funding decisions, and evaluate the success of the disaster case management partnership.

- Complete and timely case notes for each active household, including client contacts, needs identified, referrals made, resources provided, unresolved barriers, and next steps.
- Weekly time and activity tracking that identifies hours worked, client-related activity, committee or partner coordination, training time, travel time, and administrative time.

- Weekly client tracking summaries showing active cases, new intakes, closed cases, pending follow-up, households ready for unmet needs review, and households requiring additional United Way support or direction.
- Monthly written reports for the Long Term Storm Recovery Committee summarizing caseload status, major themes, unmet needs, service outcomes, volunteer coordination needs, and recommended committee action.
- Prepared unmet needs requests with sufficient documentation for committee review, including household need, resources already explored, funding gap, recommended support, and any follow-up required after a committee decision.
- Accurate use of United Way-designated forms, software, spreadsheets, client tracking tools, confidentiality practices, and file storage expectations.
- Regular communication with United Way staff about urgent client issues, barriers to service, changes in availability, concerns about scope, and support needed to keep the work moving.
- Documentation of training completed, partner meetings attended, COAD planning contributions, and recommendations for future readiness or crisis activation.
- A final contract summary at the end of the initial term that describes households served, cases closed, remaining needs, lessons learned, system recommendations, and readiness considerations for a future retainer or activation agreement.

What United Way of Bemidji Area Provides

- Orientation, job shadowing and hands on training with our staff.
- Access to disaster case management training and required coursework.
- A seat on the Long Term Storm Recovery Committee and introductions to committee partners.
- Case management documentation systems and access to designated software.
- Warm handoff of active cases from our current Disaster Case Manager.
- Ongoing supervision, consultation and support from the Executive Director.
- Established relationships with funders, agencies, volunteer groups and units of government.

Minimum Qualifications

- Background in social work, human services, community work, nonprofit services or a closely related field, or equivalent lived and work experience.
- Willingness and ability to complete disaster case management training within the first 90 days of the contract.
- Strong interviewing, assessment, written and verbal communication skills.
- Ability to respond compassionately to people in crisis while maintaining professional boundaries and confidentiality.
- Strong organizational skills and the ability to manage multiple priorities and deadlines.
- Computer proficiency, including Microsoft Office. Case management software experience preferred.
- Valid driver license, automobile insurance and reliable transportation for home visits and community meetings.
- Ability to pass a background check.
- Ability to carry, or obtain before contract execution, general and professional liability insurance.

Preferred Qualifications

- Prior disaster response, disaster case management or long term recovery experience.
- Existing knowledge of northern Minnesota resources, agencies and tribal partners.
- Experience serving ALICE households, older adults, or households in rural or low resource settings.
- Experience with unmet needs committees, VOAD or COAD structures.
- Experience responding to crises beyond natural disasters, such as mass displacement, sudden loss of housing or a public health emergency.
- Capacity to scale staffing quickly during a disaster or crisis activation.

Proposal Requirements

Please include the following:

- Cover letter with the name, mailing address, phone number and email of the respondent and the person authorized to negotiate.
- Description of the individual business or organization, including years of operation, staffing and service history.
- Statement of qualifications and how the minimum qualifications are met.
- Approach to the work, including how you work alongside our staff and committee during the training period.
- Approach to future crisis activation, including expected response time and capacity.
- Proposed compensation and budget as described above.
- Resumes or position descriptions for the individuals who will do the work.
- If applying individually, three professional references, including at least one that speaks to direct client service.
- Disclosure of any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest with United Way of Bemidji Area, its partner agencies, clients, funders, or committee members.
- Proof of insurance, or a statement of intent to obtain coverage before contract execution.

Timeline

RFP released: September 4, 2026

Proposals due: September 25, 2026 by 4:00pm

Notice of award: On or about October 1, 2026

Contract execution and orientation begin: October 15, 2026

Submission Instructions

Email proposals as a single PDF to director@unitedwaybemidji.org with the subject line Disaster Case Management RFP. Hard copies may be delivered or mailed to United Way of Bemidji Area, PO Box 27, Bemidji, MN 56619. Direct all questions in writing to Denae Alamano, Executive Director, director@unitedwaybemidji.org.

Reservation of Rights

United Way of Bemidji Area reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, cancel or amend this RFP, waive informalities or irregularities, request additional information, negotiate final terms with one or more respondents, award a contract for all or part of the requested services, or decline to award a contract.