

United Way of Olmsted County Research Team Charter



1. Background

UWOC works to help people in need reach their potential. In accomplishing that goal, the organization utilizes a variety of tactics and approaches. In addition to providing funding for local programs designed to improve lives in Olmsted County, UWOC of Olmsted County (UWOC) advocates on behalf of people in need and prioritizes policies that ensure care for vulnerable and marginalized persons. By delivering a limited set of direct service offerings, the organization ensures that critical needs are provided; and through collaboration and partnership, UWOC works to align systems to empower individuals toward long-term improvements in their conditions, leading to long-term changes for our entire community.

2. Goal

UWOC of Olmsted County's staff volunteer advisory groups are intended to enhance the organization's understanding of community conditions and best practices in the field. Each group provides perspectives and/or advice for consideration by UWOC's staff in making decisions and implementing impact strategies throughout the community.

3. Purpose

The purpose of the Research Team is to co-learn with others through research. As part of the Research Team, members will learn through literature reviews, analysis of data, and participation in site visits designed to generate data on topics for which it did not exist previously.

4. Equity and Inclusion

Equity seeks to undo discrimination and bias to create a just and fair society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Equity shall guide all stages of the Research Team process. This includes team formation; membership recruitment and selection; determination of meeting dates, times, and places; determination of organizational processes; distribution of member workload; and implementation or delivery of work products. UWOC is committed to cultivating equitable working environments for volunteers and staff.

5. Membership

- a. Composition
 - i. Team size shall be restricted to 12 members maximum, including the UWOC staff leader.
 - ii. The Research Team shall consist of members with a variety of skills, with a large focus on skills related to data analysis, research analysis, access to

primary data sources and population statistics, and the critical thinking skills to synthesize information from a variety of sources.

- iii. Membership within the Research Team shall appropriately reflect the diversity of identities, cultures, and families across Olmsted County.
 - iv. Membership to the Research Team is open to interested community members; agency representatives of UWOC's funded partners past and present; students; youth; business, religious, community, or government leaders; or other interested parties.
 - v. The Research Team will be chaired by the Impact Analyst at UWOC.
 - vi. The Research Team shall consist of members with a variety of life experiences and passions that can best inform UWOC's work by bringing contextual knowledge to the Corp's research.
- b. Selection
- i. Membership recruitment and selection shall be guided by UWOC's commitment to equity as a core organizational value.
 - ii. Members shall be selected by United Way staff based on the principles outlined in this document.
 - iii. Invitations may be issued to the community at large through media, including social media; the Get Connected volunteer portal; the United Way of Olmsted County website; outreach to businesses, agencies, or community organizations; or other methods. Direct invitations may also be issued to specific individuals or community groups, depending on the unique needs of the Team.
- c. Terms
- i. The term of membership will be two years minimum, with the option to extend to a third year. Membership terms will be staggered amongst members.
 - ii. A member may not serve concurrently on more than one volunteer team except by UWOC staff invite.
- d. Changes in membership
- i. Except in the most extreme circumstances, members are expected to adhere to terms of service.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

a. Roles of Members

- i. Research Team members serve in an advisory capacity to the UWOC staff.

b. Responsibilities of Members

- i. The Research Team will produce contextual summary papers for UWOC staff consideration.
- ii. Members will attend Research Team meetings as scheduled – typically, twice a year.
- iii. Member will meet one-on-one with UWOC staff lead as mutually-agreed upon.

- iv. Members will be expected to complete work assignments between meetings. Workload primary responsibilities include:
 - 1. Review and summarize best practices, literature, and research
 - 2. Collection and analysis of local level data
 - 3. Plan and participate in site visits
 - v. Membership may be terminated upon recommendation of UWOC staff should a member fail to participate in regular meetings or homework assignments to the extent that it negatively impacts the work of the Research Team.
 - vi. Team members are expected to adhere to UWOC Volunteer Handbook guidelines.
- c. UWOC Staff
- i. The UWOC Impact Analyst will be assigned to the Research Team and will serve as its chair-person.
 - ii. The UWOC Impact Analyst will keep summary notes from Research Team meetings, which will be conveyed to all members of the team and archived for UWOC records.
- d. Visitors
- i. At times, additional UWOC staff may request to attend a Research Team meeting, as appropriate to their work and UWOC needs.
 - ii. With the exception of invited presenters, attending for a specific agenda time and purpose, other visitors are not allowed at Research Team meetings.
 - iii. Visitors shall observe the responsibilities and guidelines set forth in this document. Visitors shall also respect the organization and informal culture of the team.

7. Operations and Logistics

- a. The Research Team will operate according to the preferences of the given group and its UWOC staff leader.
- b. Research Team meetings will be bi-annually for 2 hours.
- c. Meetings dates and times, style of meeting, and decision-making processes shall be determined by team members.
- d. Research topics may be brought to the group either by UWOC staff or members of the Research Team, and the UWOC staff lead will determine priorities.
- e. Any product that leaves the work group will be reviewed by both UWOC staff and individuals with contextual expertise before becoming publicly available.
- f. Onboarding will include an ethics training to ensure that work produced by the Research Team: promotes the dignity and autonomy of the individuals, families, and communities with which it engages; preserves the anonymity and confidentiality of those whose lives are represented; frames findings in a manner that is factual while being neither accusatory nor exculpatory; and is carried out in an environment that promotes trust, accountability, and transparency.