

2026 Public Policy Agenda & Objectives

About Valley of the Sun United Way

For 100 years, Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW) has unified diverse partners, donors, business supporters, nonprofits, government and faith-based communities to build a stronger Valley for us all. VSUW monitors needs, identifies critical social issues, and brings the right people together to advance the common good.

Housing and Homelessness Priorities

Goal: Ensure all can have a safe home to call their own.

Focus: Maintaining safe and stable housing through various prevention, wraparound, and rehousing services, expanding and strengthening programs that address homelessness, broader housing options, and housing affordability, including housing tax credits.

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

1. Monitor HUD funding for homelessness programs and protect funding for permanent supportive housing.
2. Monitor ROAD to Housing Act of 2025 (Senator Gallego).
3. Monitor and protect the allocation of Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and weatherization program funding for Arizona.
4. Monitor the Preventing Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Act (PYHDP).

STATE PRIORITIES

1. Monitor funding for AZ 2-1-1, a critical entry point to services for individuals in crisis.
2. Monitor the Arizona Promise Budget - \$13M in awards for Eviction Prevention and Homelessness Response in Arizona

COUNTY AND LOCAL PRIORITIES

1. Monitor implementation of Prop 409 to support mental health services
2. Support local efforts to mitigate zoning and community opposition for affordable housing, new shelter and homeless services.

3. Support Right to Counsel for eviction prevention efforts
4. Monitor funding for Keys to Change Campus, a critical county-wide effort supporting unhoused individuals

Education

Goal: Ensure all families have quality education options through sustained funding and effective policies that close gaps in access, quality, and outcomes.

Focus: Close opportunity gaps to ensure children read at grade level by 3rd grade and youth are prepared for educational success and employment.

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

1. Sustain federal investment in proven programs such as Early Head Start.
2. Ensure all children and students have access to educational opportunities that set them up for long-term success by informing and engaging the Arizona delegation.

STATE PRIORITIES

1. Participate in stakeholder meetings and monitor bills related to student literacy ensuring proposed legislation is supportive of education goals.
2. Advance equitable and accountable education funding across all school types and ensure equitable access to the supports needed by students to succeed.
3. Protect support for student success through mental health services, digital literacy, and college and career readiness.

LOCAL PRIORITIES

1. Support programming and policy that reduces Chronic Absenteeism in partnership with school districts and school boards, and implement policies identified by the Absenteeism Task Force.
2. Maintain family and student access to high quality academic supports, appropriate tools, and basic needs to effectively support their child's academic journey.

Health

Goal: Remove barriers to ensure everyone in our community is healthy, with a focus on access to food and health care.

Focus: Help people overcome barriers to good health by improving access to nutritious food and quality health education and services, including preventative care.

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

1. Protect accessibility and affordability of healthcare coverage and maintain Medicare and Medicaid services to support low-income Arizonans.
2. Protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

STATE PRIORITIES

1. Protect funding to eliminate co-pays (\$0.70 per day) for reduced-price school meals for eligible students, estimated to provide about 10 million free meals and approximately 40,000 additional children with free breakfast and lunch.
2. Support policy aimed at providing and maintaining Medicare and Medicaid at current funded levels.

Workforce Development

Goal: Open pathways to better-paying jobs.

Focus: Advocate for policies that help individuals increase preparation for a living wage job and achievement of higher paying employment with a focus on education, skills training, and supportive services that help individuals overcome obstacles.

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

1. Monitor and analyze federal policy changes introduced through the FY26 Budget Proposal and the OBBBA reconciliation package, with a focus on their impact on workforce development, education access, and basic needs programs.
2. Protect the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit to provide ongoing income support to struggling families and help build thriving communities.

STATE PRIORITIES

1. Support and promote workforce accelerator program Future 48, providing advanced skills training in Arizona.
2. Identify policy opportunities that strengthen the state's workforce by supporting fair chance hiring programs/workforce development efforts that reduce discrimination and improve hiring options.
3. Collaborate with Governor's Office and First Things First to provide more affordable, high-quality options for childcare, promoting successful models of employers offering workplace benefits to expand access.

Nonprofit and Community Strengthening

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

1. Protect funding for and accessibility to equitable disaster response programs including bolstering support for disaster preparedness and mitigation programs.
2. Support favorable taxation policy and the philanthropic infrastructure necessary for a robust nonprofit/social service sector