

United Way of  
Southeast Missouri



**NEWS RELEASE  
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### **United Way of Southeast Missouri Awarded Grant from HQ**

***Southeast Missouri*** – United Way of Southeast Missouri is one of 120 United Way chapters selected from a pool of over 400 applicants to receive a \$10,000 grant from United Way Worldwide’s COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund.

This grant is dedicated to helping selected United Way chapters increase their internal capacity and support their "back office" COVID and/or disaster readiness, relief, and long-term recovery efforts. United Way of Southeast Missouri (UWSEMO) plans to use this grant to update their outdated IT infrastructure.

“As with many nonprofits, COVID made it painfully clear that our technology was not prepared for a pandemic or disaster of any type,” says UWSEMO executive director Elizabeth Shelton. As United Way employees worked from home, only one employee had access to a functioning UWSEMO laptop; other employees used personal computers or tablets. Employees without cameras or speakers on their computers had to rely on personal cell phones to attend numerous virtual meetings. They were also unable to host meetings, as screen sharing was not an option.

The organization originally had budgeted to upgrade its hardware in phases. Unfortunately, the forced cancellation of fundraisers caused by the pandemic postponed these upgrades. According to Shelton, all variable expenses were redirected to meeting financial commitments to the 28 nonprofit partners in the UWSEMO network.

Shelton explains “We have upgraded our software, but our devices are 8-10 years old, and our phone system is 15 years old. Upgrades to our IT infrastructure, communications technology, and hardware will enable this small but mighty team to function during disasters, but more importantly, it will improve our daily ability to help the partners and people we serve.”

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