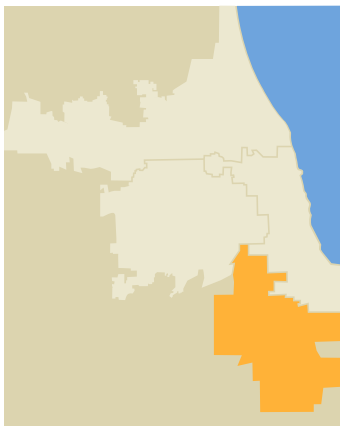
SOUTH-SOUTHWEST SUBURBS REGIONAL PROFILE

United Way of Metro Chicago



OUR REGION

Commonly known as the Southland, the **South-Southwest Suburban Region (SSW)** is comprised of nearly **1 million residents** living in **62 communities** throughout Cook and Will Counties. The Southland is home to more than 20% of suburban Cook County's population and nearly 15% of its businesses.

CHALLENGES FACING THE REGION

- According to our 2025 ALICE report*, **1 in 3 households in Cook County** are struggling to make ends meet
- **High property taxes and a shrinking tax base** are driving businesses, households, and jobs from the south suburbs
- Many communities in the Southland face food insecurity, with more than **50% living in poverty** in Chicago Heights, Harvey, Riverdale, and Robbins.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES: A DUAL APPROACH IN THE SOUTH-SOUTHWEST SUBURBS

*United Way ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed – research provides statewide insight into the financial struggles facing many households.

INVESTMENT STRATEGY IN THE SOUTH-SOUTHWEST SUBURBS

United Way of Metro Chicago is committed to helping our neighbors meet their basic needs and working alongside community leaders to build stronger neighborhoods through our Neighborhood Network place-based approach.

IMPACT GRANT FUNDING*

- **Total Investment.....$761,250**
- **Total Number of Funded Agencies.....21**

Access to Healthcare..... 7
Food Assistance..... 5
Housing..... 7
Safety from Abuse..... 3
Workforce Development..... 4

*January–December 2026

BLUE ISLAND/ROBBINS NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

LEAD AGENCY Metropolitan Family Services
COMMUNITY VISION Improving outcomes for families by addressing food insecurity and other basic needs

FORD HEIGHTS/CHICAGO HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

LEAD AGENCY Cornerstone Community Development Corporation

HARVEY NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

LEAD AGENCY Restoration Ministries

PARK FOREST/RICHTON PARK NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

LEAD AGENCY OAI

SUMMIT NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

LEAD AGENCY SGA Youth & Family Services

COMMUNITY VISION As new Neighborhood Networks in 2023, Ford Heights/Chicago Heights, Harvey, Park Forest/Richton Park, and Summit are developing and refining their community visions.

CONNECTING SOUTH-SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN FAMILIES TO DIRECT SUPPORT

CARE PROJECTS

United Way partners with volunteer groups to **create essential item care package kits that are distributed to United Way nonprofit community partners** across the region. Kits include Hygiene Kits, Baby Kits, Snack Packs, Literacy Kits, New Home Kits, School Supply Kits, and Senior Kits.

2-1-1

This **free and confidential helpline is available 24/7/365** for all residents in Cook County. Individuals can call, text, or web chat to get connected to essential health and social service resources. Learn more at **211MetroChicago.org.**

APRIL FOOD DAY

April Food Day is United Way of Metro Chicago's annual food collection event and awards luncheon that addresses food insecurity in the SSW suburbs. The event **distributes 100,000 pounds of non-perishable food and household goods** to pantries across the Southland.

JOIN US! Together, we can build a stronger South-Southwest Suburban Region. Learn more at **LIVEUNITEDchicago.org**

Updated February 12, 2026