



**United Way**  
**Niagara**



## Running a Virtual Campaign Kick-off

As you begin your United Way workplace campaign, a virtual kick-off has many benefits.

**Ready, Set, Go!** A virtual kick-off clearly marks the start of your United Way effort creating a sense of urgency and a timeline for colleagues. Campaigns with kick-off events have proven to raise more dollars in support of our community!

**Inspiration** The kick-off provides employees with an opportunity to hear about the impact of their donations and be inspired, so they can make an informed decision about giving.

**Team Building** This is a great chance to bring employees together in a common cause of caring and build morale, which is especially important in a time of social distancing.

**Stage Setting** It demonstrates the passion your organization, your senior management team and your colleagues have for the campaign and supporting our community.

**Your United Way staff partner is here to support you and can help you plan and customize your kick-off event. We have created tools and resources to support you in hosting your kick-off virtually.**

## Key Considerations and Planning

**Helpful Hint:**  
Reference the Virtual Kick-Off Planning Schedule for a 5-week timeline that can help you get things rolling.

### Technology Platform

Confirm the online web conferencing platform that is approved by your workplace and learn about the platform's functionality, so that your United Way staff partner can help you build your kick-off agenda and activities on the platform. If you cannot host your kick-off on your own technology platform, speak to your United Way staff partner.

### Senior Management Support

Support from your Executives is critical to showing your organization is behind the campaign. Book their time so they can participate in your virtual kick-off, or see if there may be existing meetings you can piggyback on. See Appendix B for suggested talking points and presentation content that your senior management team can personalize.

### Consider your Audience

For best results, we recommend a kick-off event is scheduled for no longer than 30 minutes. If your employee base is large, you may consider hosting a series of kick offs (e.g. by department) throughout the day, or across a few days. While there is no ideal, you want to strike a balance between being able to reach all your employees, and helping people be comfortable enough to ask questions and interact.

### Determine the Meeting Host and Other Company Speakers

It is best if the Employee Campaign Coordinator (ECC) acts as facilitator to ensure your kick-off sticks to the agenda. If the ECC needs support, your United Way staff partner can act as co-host.

Invite your CEO or other executive(s) to take part and speak, too, as their leadership can inspire others and demonstrate support of United Way from the top down.

### Make it Interactive

Engage your colleagues during the kick-off. Consider interactive activities like online polls or quizzes to keep their attention online. Your United Way staff partner can help you build this activity.

### Raise Awareness about Impact

United Way has speakers that can join your virtual meeting and online awareness activities like a poverty simulation, impact stories, and campaign videos can help share the impact of donations and inspire people to give. Your United Way staff partner can help you select the best awareness-building activities for your agenda.

### Set Clear Action Steps

Let people know how they can donate and/or how they can get involved in the campaign. We recommend sending your donation link immediately following your kick-off event, so people can act while they're feeling inspired.

**Need a UW Speaker for your event?**  
Please contact your UW staff partner.

# APPENDIX A

## Recommended Agenda

We welcome you to make use of the following template agenda as you plan your event.

Virtual meeting login in details: [include details here]

### Opening - 5 mins

Time: XXX am/pm

CEO/ECC/Sr. Leaders

- Welcome
- Value of UW & Company partnership
- Importance of United Way now
- Encourage all to get involved with campaign activities
- Interactive poll or quiz to get people engaged

### United Way Awareness activity - 7-12 minutes

Facilitated by United Way

#### Activity examples:

- Ask your United Way staff partner about a poverty simulation
- UW & Company quiz
- Group whiteboard sharing (e.g. “Why I care about community.”, “Which #UNIGNORABLE issue resonates with me?”)
- UW videos
- Guest speaker from United Way

### Closing remarks - 5 mins

CEO/ECC/Sr. Management

#### CEO/ECC to thank participants, and reiterate importance of United Way

- Call to action/donate now
- Share company fundraising/participation goals
- How to give
- Instructions on next steps – donation link to come, who to contact with questions, etc.

## Key Points for Speakers

The below can be customized/personalized to meet the needs of the speaker(s) at your virtual kick-off.

### Opening remarks

- Welcome attendees, and thank them for joining the call
- My Name is.....
- Before we begin, I would like to welcome two very important guests who are with us this morning (introduce UW and UW Speaker).
- As many of you know, I am a strong believer of United Way's work and I am proud to be a part of <COMPANY'S> United Way Campaign.
- The need for access to food, mental health counselling, and employment supports has doubled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has amplified issues that were previously lurking in the shadows. Issues like poverty, mental illness and food insecurity were prevalent in Niagara long before we ever heard the term COVID-19. The ripple effects of this pandemic – on mental health and well-being, on food security and on poverty as a whole – will remain long after this public health crisis is over.
- Vulnerable people in our community simply do not have the same capacity to cope with and recover from the devastating impacts, as those with access to greater resources and stability. It has become clear that many have lost their jobs. Those working essential jobs are at increased risk of infection—and many lack access to paid sick leave. Food insecurity has skyrocketed and the housing crisis is getting worse. There is a shadow pandemic of domestic and gender-based violence. Youth mental health is an ongoing challenge.
- What inspires me is that as an organization, we have all pulled together and looked to how we can help during this pandemic. Everyone is stepping up and doing what they can to help to ensure no one falls through the cracks. The reality is that more than 130,000 people in Niagara relied on United Way in 2020. Those who lack the safety, healthy food, housing stability, belonging, mental health support, or connection they need to live well - need us and we need you.
- When this crisis is behind us, we will face an extraordinary challenge. How do we build back better in the face of increased inequality and deepening poverty across Niagara?
- A successful recovery from this pandemic involves all of us. We rise, and fall, together.
- That's why we are asking you to stand with us today to ensure everyone in our community has their fundamental needs met. And, even more importantly, to tear down the barriers that hold us all back from reaching our community's fullest potential.
- I want to take a moment to recognize and thank each and every one of you in this room for stepping up to support United Way every year. Our collective commitment demonstrates <COMPANY'S> leadership in communities across Canada, raising over X\$ for United Way. KEY POINT ABOUT LAST YEAR'S CAMPAIGN (your UW Staff Partner can help provide some information if needed)
- IF THE SPEAKER HAS A PERSONAL STORY ABOUT UNITED WAY OR SOMETHING THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED, ADD HERE
- Thank you again for your personal leadership and generous support of United Way.
- Introduce the next section of the event <e.g. audience poll, speaker, UW activity> and turn over to the activity facilitator





## Closing Remarks

- Thank you, < GUEST SPEAKER>, for joining us today and speaking. United Way plays such an important role in our community, investing in a critical social safety net in the Niagara region. This vision ensures we are lifting our region up and that regardless of background and circumstance – everyone can thrive.
- Our annual United Way campaign starts on <DATE>. We have an amazing team that has worked hard to make this year's campaign even better. Thank you, <CAMPAIGN VOLUNTEERS> for your leadership in the campaign.
- <By now, a donation link should be in your inbox. I encourage you to make a gift now. Let's demonstrate our commitment to our staff before we officially launch the campaign on the DATE.> **Optional if there are multiple kick offs or you sent out the link early.**
- Our firm's donations to United Way are part of how we are building a stronger community and creating legacy across our communities.
- Thanks everyone.

# Virtual Kick-Off Planning Schedule

## Confirm CEO Attendance

Before picking an event date, work with the CEO's team to book their time and ensure they are available to host the kick-off event(s). Great leadership inspires others!

Also consider whether your CEO would like support in scripting their speaking remarks, or would like to speak to slides.

## Send Invitation

Send out invitation(s), providing the web conferencing information in the booking.

## Collect RSVPs

Consider tracking RSVPs, so you can get a better idea of how colleagues are responding to your invitation.

## All Systems Go

Complete an 'all systems go' run-through to test your conferencing system, presentation documents, etc. This will put your mind at ease, and may help to identify issues you can rectify before event day!

## Test Your Pledge Tool

Ensure your pledge tool is ready to accept donations.

## Thank Others

Send a follow-up communication to thank staff for joining your kick-off event, and encourage them to visit the pledge tool to consider donating.

Thank key contributors to your kick-off, too (your impact speaker, and anyone who helped you plan). They'll be pleased to be recognized!

**3-5 Weeks Before**

**1 Week Before**

**Event Day**

**FIRST**

**2 Weeks Before**

**Day Before**

**Follow Up**

## Draft Invitation

Draft up your invitation. If you need approval from others, consider starting a week earlier.

## Confirm Invite List

Pull and sort your invitation list. Work with your HR department to ensure you have captured all staff. Divide up the list (e.g. by department) if you are hosting multiple events.

## Request Other Key Speakers

If desired, work with your United Way staff partner to request an impact speaker, to really drive home the positive impact you're making in the community. Please submit this request as early as possible!

## Prep Your Pledge Tool

If you haven't started already, take steps to get your pledge tool up and running to capture donations on event day.

## Send a Reminder

Consider sending a reminder invitation or nudge, if many colleagues haven't responded to your initial invitation.

## Update the Invitation

If desired, make updates to the calendar invitation to include an agenda, presentation document, list of speakers, or other key information. This update can also serve as a reminder to confirmed attendees.

## Confirm Key Speakers

Ensure you have all necessary pieces to enable a successful kick-off presence for your CEO. If applicable, check in with your United Way impact speaker to ensure everything is on track, and see if they have any questions (especially about how to access your kick-off virtually).

## Prep Your Pledge Tool

Check in on progress with your pledge tool. Will it be ready to go on event day?

## Last Minute Test

Test your conference system and any other technology - just in case.

## Inspire!

Your event is virtually 'attended' by many, and goes off without a hitch. Your entire organization is inspired to support their community and participate in this year's Campaign!

## Immediately After the Event: Send the Donation Link

Now that you've inspired everyone, give them the means to support their community by sending out the donation link.

If you've hosted multiple events, send the link out after the last kick-off event has concluded.