

# United Interfaith Action of Southeastern MA



## United Interfaith Action of Southeastern Massachusetts

**FOUNDED:** 1996

**CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET:** \$328,000

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### Investment Opportunity

UIA seeks \$500,000 to increase the number of community members trained each cycle from 50 to 120. To accomplish this, the organization will add staff, increase professional development opportunities, and ensure pay rates are in line with those in the MCAN Network. UIA will double the number of community trainings each cycle and send emerging leaders to trainings at the state/national level. With this investment, UIA can build a force for good – meeting ordinary people where they are – giving them the tools to be the leaders they need to be to create change.

United Interfaith Action of Southeastern MA (UIA) is a faith-based, community organizing group addressing social justice issues and supporting leadership development among low to moderate income residents of New Bedford and Fall River. It is affiliated statewide with the MA Communities Action Network (MCAN) and nationally with Faith in Action. In Southeastern MA, UIA recruits and trains community members and clergy in order to build a network of leaders with the power and capacity to address economic and social justice issues, such as educational disparities, immigration, housing, and public safety.

Through training and ongoing support, UIA develops grassroots leaders to work in a cycle of organizing that includes deep community listening, identifying areas of need, conducting issue research, honing action proposals and engaging with officials on policies and budgetary appropriations for concrete change.

Using this model, UIA engages marginalized people – those who are often not included at the decision-making tables – in its leadership and membership. UIA provides these community members with the organizing tools to create systemic change, addressing different issues every one to two years depending on the concerns selected by emerging leaders.

### Two-Year Goals

- Increase the number of community leaders trained each year from 50 to 120
- Grow UIA current staff from 2.5 FTE to 6 and double the number of interns
- Establish offices and training spaces in both Fall River and New Bedford
- Triple the number of professional opportunities for staff as well as trainings offered in the community

### Ways to Invest

#### FINANCIAL

- \$60,000 funds a community organizer to support 30 new leaders
- \$10,000 funds a yearlong training cycle for 30 leaders
- \$5,000 helps send a group of emerging leaders to state or national training
- \$2,500 funds state and national staff development programs

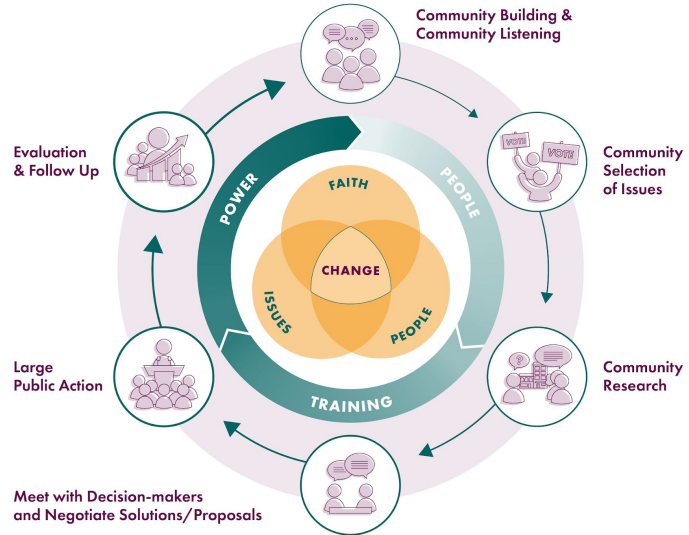
#### IN-KIND

- Become a community leader active in UIA's organizing and issue campaigns
- Offer space for meetings, trainings, and/or public actions
- Offer coaching on fundraising, board development, data integration, and/or social media
- Provide Interpreter services for community actions/trainings

## Leadership & Governance

Executive Director Andrea Sheppard Lomba has worked in faith-based community organizing since 1998. Her upbringing, education, career, and experience led her to seek ways to address unjust systems by empowering those closest to the pain. Structured around general membership through congregations, UIA's work is led by its staff, Board of Directors, Issue Teams, Organizing Committees within member congregations, and a Clergy & Faith Leaders Caucus. Grassroots leaders make decisions and drive the organization's work at every level.

## UIA'S MODEL



“

UIA taught me a way toward real change. My strategic mind has been awakened, and I can be creative in finding solutions with others.”

MARIA JOSE MORALES  
Mental Health Clinician and  
UIA Community Organizer



## BUILDING GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP

UIA's model is centered on creating a collective of people grounded in a social justice vision. To achieve systemic change, UIA conducts cycles of listening, issue identification, and action campaigns every one to two years.

Beginning with **community building and listening**, emerging leaders are trained to conduct one-on-one conversations and small group listening meetings within their organizations to build relationships and identify common interests around areas of concern. UIA organizing staff then work with grassroots leaders to prioritize areas of greatest concern and the **community selects issues** for focus. In the next phase, emerging leaders conduct **community research** for greater understanding of needs and solutions and to develop proposals to address the issue. Leaders are then trained to **meet with decision-makers** to present solutions. Next, UIA staff assist leaders with organizing **large public actions**, often attended by hundreds, to show community support to officials, obtain their commitment to take action, and hold them accountable. At the conclusion of each cycle, UIA staff work with the leaders to **evaluate progress** on addressing the issue as well as their own development.

Within each issue area, UIA works to build power for change at the local, state, and even national level. The goal is to achieve at least one issue win each year and to develop enough capacity to sustain multiple campaigns through a growing leadership base of “ordinary people” seen and heard, working with stakeholders and officials to enact policies, develop programs and increase budget appropriations. Above all, UIA's model develops grassroots leaders, through training and structure, to facilitate their path to step into their own power as change agents in their communities and beyond.



**UIA has been a partner and a leader on public education, affordable housing, COVID relief and more. They are skilled at mobilizing constituents, the public, statewide coalitions and fellow policy makers.**



**REPRESENTATIVE ANTONIO CABRAL**  
13<sup>th</sup> Bristol District, New Bedford



Over the past 27 years, UIA’s growing base of grassroots leaders has impacted numerous issues affecting its communities.

**HOUSING:** Fall River and New Bedford continue to have some of the highest rates of eviction in Massachusetts, with over 4,000 on housing waitlists. UIA leaders are actively working in both cities on increasing affordable housing funding and supportive policies.

**IMMIGRATION:** Alongside other organizations, UIA helped to win passage of statewide legislation ensuring driver’s licenses for nearly 20,000 undocumented immigrants in Fall River and New Bedford.

**PUBLIC SAFETY:** UIA leaders helped to secure funding for Spanish-language training for Fall River police and successfully advocated for additional mental health clinicians for 911 behavioral calls in New Bedford.

**EDUCATION:** UIA helped win passage of the Fair Share Amendment and leads the statewide Vocational Education Justice Coalition to change access to vocational education from points-based ranking to equitable lottery admission.

**VOTER ENGAGEMENT:** UIA leaders increased civic participation among underrepresented communities, canvassing 3,600 registered voters to support redistricting and win New Bedford’s first majority-minority district.

### FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

UIA approaches fundraising as it approaches all other aspects of its work, with its staff and its membership of community leaders at the center of decision-making. In addition to funds generated by membership dues, individual donors, and fundraising events, UIA’s mission is largely supported by several foundations. Expanding foundation support and increasing overall fundraising capacity is critical to UIA’s growth and sustainability.

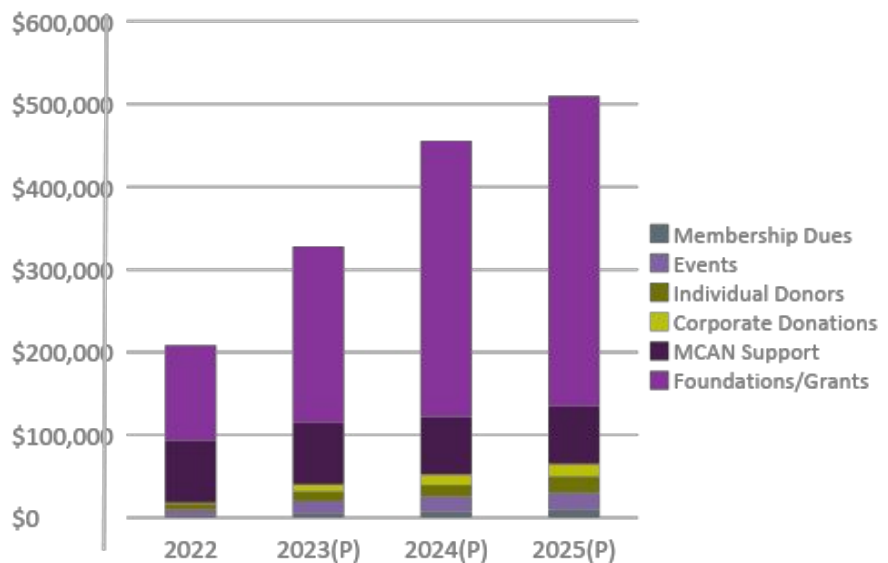
#### Key Investors

- CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
- EPISCOPAL CITY MISSION
- ISLAND FOUNDATION
- MASSACHUSETTS BUDGET AND POLICY CENTER
- MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITIES ACTION NETWORK (MCAN)
- MASS VOTER TABLE

#### Partners

- DELIVERING ON EQUITY COLLECTIVE
- FAITH IN ACTION
- NAACP NEW BEDFORD
- RAISE UP MASSACHUSETTS
- VOCATIONAL EDUCATION JUSTICE COALITION

#### Revenue by Source





**Success Story:  
Renee Ledbetter**

Our Lady of the Assumption Parish was devastated when a parishioner was shot and killed in her apartment in New Bedford. Renee Ledbetter, affected by community violence herself, wanted to do something but didn't know where to start.

With UIA training, she gained confidence to join a team of community members who shared her desire to make a difference. Together they met with families affected by violence and researched programs in other communities. She and fellow UIA members talked to city officials and led a public action of over 1,000 people to start a new program to address youth violence.

Today, the Shannon Community Safety Initiative in New Bedford serves over 300 youth each year – in school, in homes, and on the street. Renee is now the Executive Director of the program and has served as UIA Board President since 2016.

*“UIA helped me to develop as a leader...It helped me to turn righteous anger into work for concrete change in a common struggle,” says Renee Ledbetter.*



**PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH**

Below is a summary of the key measures that UIA will track to demonstrate progress, create internal accountability, incorporate lessons learned, and adjust strategy as necessary.

	FY 2023	FY 2024 (P)	FY 2025 (P)
<b>PROGRAM PERFORMANCE</b>			
<b>Leadership Development:</b> Number of trainings offered for community leaders each year at the local, state, and national level.	4	7	10
<b>Systemic Change:</b> Accomplish at least one issue “win” each year based on community priorities and input. <i>Following are examples of issue areas for focus any given year.</i>	Equitable access to vocational education	Access to affordable housing	Participatory budgeting
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/CAPACITY-BUILDING</b>			
Number of staff of community organizers and interns to support teams/campaigns	2.5 staff 6 interns	4 staff 12 interns	6 staff 15 interns
Number of professional development for staff	3 workshops	10 workshops	12 workshops
Number of board members (outreach and fundraising)	7	8	10
Total Revenue	\$328,000	\$455,500	\$510,000

**SOCIAL IMPACT**

UIA’s plan is to develop 120 community leaders each year, strategizing about and moving issues, locally and statewide, with those leaders able to mobilize at least another 1,000 people. With current issue areas that include housing, education, immigration, public safety, and voter engagement, the goal is to achieve at least one concrete issue win each year and develop enough leadership capacity to sustain multiple campaigns to maximize impact. UIA’s larger vision is to change the landscape of power in these communities by having more of its leaders seated at key decision-making tables in the local community and beyond, eventually holding positions of power as decision-makers themselves.

Below is the summary of the social impact that UIA aspires to have on its core communities of Fall River and New Bedford over the next two years.

INDICATOR	CURRENT NUMBERS	2025
Trained Community Leaders	50	120
Congregational/Organization Teams	10	20
Fundraising Team Members	12	20
Clergy and Faith Leader Caucus Members	15	30
UIA Youth Chapter Leaders	2	25
UIA Community Leaders in Decision-making Roles (for example, School Committee, City Council etc.)	6	12