

# IMAGERY & DESIGN STYLE GUIDE

**United Way of the Alberta Capital Region**

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# Brand Alignment

Imagery plays an important role in sharing the stories of the challenges we face collectively and the successes we share together. United Way of the Alberta Capital Region's brand is reflected in the visuals that we choose to use and share.

It is vital that when considering and selecting photos, videos, graphics, and design elements to use in marketing and communications materials, we are guided by our brand attributes.

## We are Kind

- We approach all our endeavors with kindness, fostering an atmosphere of compassion and empathy in our interactions within the community and amongst ourselves.

## We are Trustworthy

- We are reliable stewards of the community's resources and trust. Our actions consistently reflect our commitment to transparency and integrity.

## We are Inclusive

- We are advocates of inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring every individual in our community has an equal opportunity to thrive, regardless of their circumstances. We celebrate diversity and recognize that everyone contributes value to our community.

## We are Inspiring

- We strive to motivate, encourage, and innovate. We uplift through compelling content, meaningful stories, and innovative solutions. We empower individuals to make a lasting impact and deliver positive change.

## We are Connectors

- We are the bond that unites communities, building strong, resilient relationships that support and uplift those in need.





## Conveying brand attributes

Choose images that align with our values, our key messages, and any thematic areas such as mental health, impactful connection, and community support.

We use diverse and inclusive visuals that represent our local community, and feature individuals of various backgrounds, ages, and ethnicities. Since we are asking people to connect to people, they should see themselves, their neighbours, and their community reflecting through our choice of imagery.

**For example:** Be mindful that we do not reinforce stereotypes through images, such as only depicting racialized people as program participants and never as donors or volunteers.

We take special care to refrain from using negative or triggering imagery when talking about issues being faced in our community. Instead, all visuals should present the subject in an empowered and dignified manner.

Using a desire-centred approach ([Eve Tuck, 2009](#)) showcases the positive and empowering journeys that participants take when seeking help from United Way initiatives and supported programs, instead of images that could exploit the subjects or harm the viewer.

**For example:** When selecting imagery for a post about support for wildfire evacuees, do not use images of flames or damaged homes. These types of images could harm people who are looking for resources and support. Instead, look for images that show people receiving care and support.





## Our brand attributes



### We are kind.

We manifest this value in our communications through empathetic language and storytelling; seeking to help our audiences identify with challenges experienced in our community; and by using person-first language.

Consider images that illustrate: compassion, friendliness, humanity, love, empathy, and empowerment.

### We are trustworthy.

We follow this value in our communications by providing reliable and consistent information; providing clear reporting and outcomes to our stakeholders; and by owning our mistakes clearly and honestly.

Consider images that illustrate: credibility, honesty, reliability, authenticity, and sincerity.





### **We are inclusive.**

We carry this value into our communications by always staying up to date with standards for inclusivity and accessibility; by listening to the people we serve; and by seeking out stories and visuals that show the diversity of the communities we are a part of.

Consider images that illustrate: diversity, consideration, respect, welcoming, and safety.

### **We are inspiring.**

We activate this value in our communications through clear calls to action; powerful and succinct storytelling; and consistent encouragement and recognition of our donors, volunteers, and community members.

Consider images that illustrate: encouragement, activity, uplifting, motivation, and emboldening.



### **We are connectors.**

We embody this value in our communications through inclusive language; collective framing; and respectful sharing practices when it comes to the subjects of our storytelling.

Consider images that illustration: providing, sharing, purposeful, and support.





# Copy Style

## Typography and Hierarchy

Typography rules come from [United Way Centraide's brand identity guidelines](#) and should be used when developing any content for United Way.

Our primary font is Avenir. We use this consistently in our communications. Our secondary font is Arial, but we only use this font if Avenir is not available.

To preserve consistency throughout United Way of the Alberta Capital Region's brand, the following font sizes are recommended for the outlined hierarchy. It is good practice to use no more than four different sizes when designing a document and laying out content, to keep the design structured and clear.

Font sizes are at the designer's discretion.

**Avenir LT Std 65 Medium  
is our heading weight 24/28**

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**Avenir LT Std 55 Heavy  
is our sub-heading weight 16/20**

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Avenir LT Std 45 Book  
is our paragraph title weight 11/13

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# Visual Selection & Application

## Colour

We recommend against the use of duotone images<sup>1</sup>, overly saturated or desaturated images, unless specific to creative direction of a particular marketing campaign.

- **Colour visuals convey vibrant, authentic look and feel.** Colour imagery will be used in most our communication pieces, regardless of subject. However, ensure all visuals conform to United Way's accessibility and inclusivity communications guidelines.
- **Black and White or Greyscale visuals convey a more somber and serious tone.** As United Way content is to be empowering and inspiring, black and white images should rarely be used, except in instances where required due to production restrictions (such as newsprint).

## Consistency

- Ensure the focus is on portraying the impact of United Way's work in the community. Avoid using outdated or irrelevant imagery that does not resonate with our brand values or goals.
- When using visuals from multiple sources, try to ensure that they all fit the same tone. Not doing so may result in our imagery being misaligned with content.
- Select a good mix of landscape and portrait orientated visuals to ensure you'll have what you need for the medium you'll use. It's always helpful to label what visuals will be used where and when planning your marketing campaign.

## Quality

- Pay attention to the composition, lighting, and overall quality of the images to ensure professional and visually appealing results. When taking photos and videos, ensure lighting is flattering to the subject's skin tones.
- Using low-resolution or poor-quality images may undermine the professionalism and credibility of United Way's brand.
- Avoid the use of images that are overly abstract or difficult to interpret, as they may fail to communicate the desired message effectively.

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<sup>1</sup> the use of two contrasting colors to create a dramatic effect in design.





- Don't use images with distracting elements or cluttered backgrounds that take away from the main subject.

## Specifications

Use the right image specifications for its intended purpose (social media, website, print, etc.).

- It's important that imagery always adheres to platform specs and best practices regarding sizing and composition, which often varies from platform to platform.
- Images used in printed materials should be 300 dpi or higher. It's always good to speak with your production partner to ensure your image resolution and specs will meet production requirements.

## Accessibility

**Captions:** People who have sensory processing challenges, are hard of hearing, or deaf rely on captions to understand video content, as well provide context for users watching your video on mute.

- All videos, regardless of platform, should have captions. This includes videos shown at in-person events, such as Red Tie Gala.
- Because some platforms do not allow captions to be added after the fact, captions should be added during production (hard coded or burned in). This also prevents subtitles covering over text in the video, such as titles, and allows for greater creative control over the look of the captions.
- Captions should be used (versus subtitles) as they convey other sounds and background noises.

**Alt text:** All social media, PDF graphics, and website images should have alt text descriptions. This allows users using screen-readers to understand what the image is, as well as improve search engine optimization.

- Alt text should be descriptive and written in full sentences but should not be more than 125 characters. Starting your alt text with "picture of" is redundant, as screen readers will identify it as an image.
- You can also add image and video descriptions directly into the copy for Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook.





# Principal Photography & Videography

Whenever possible, use imagery generated or owned by our United Way. We call this **Principal photography and videography**.

- Principal photography and videography may include images that show:
  - volunteers, employees, and industry partners engaged in community activities.
  - events held to support a cause or program.
  - individuals benefiting from United Way initiatives or funded agencies.

## Crediting sources

- Where possible, acknowledge the source of your image when they are obtained externally, including when under contract or by a photographer who is donating or volunteering their services. When possible, include the photographer's credit in a caption.
  - | **For example:** Photo by Nancy Critchley Photography for United Way of the Alberta Capital Region.
- Communications staff must seek written permission when using user-generated imagery (such as images from events, members of the public, etc.) and imagery from agency partners. When possible, include the credit in a caption.
  - | **For example:** Image supplied by The Family Centre.
  - | **For example:** Image used with permission by BGCBiggs.





## Consent

- United Way's goal is to emphasize the dignity and diversity of our community. When capturing or sourcing images and video, be sure to get the subject's consent and include them in the process of how they are being portrayed.
- Images and video must be captured with full and ongoing consent by communications staff (or a designated alternate) with a [signed waiver](#).
  - Outline the ways the images and videos will be used and verify if there are any uses that the subject would not be comfortable with.
  - Follow up with subjects in the event the proposed uses changes.

**For example:** be clear (in writing if possible) that photos could be used in marketing materials or communications assets that may be distributed online, in workplaces, in media, etc.

- When using photos of participants of United Way initiatives or funded agencies, ensure their photo is only ever used with their story.
  - For example:** do not use a photo of an All in for Youth participant with a Tools for School story.
- Staff outside the communications department must also seek permission from the Communications department when using Principal Photography outside of the original use cases outlined during the distribution of the images, or before distributing the image to an external partner.
  - For example:** If a workplace campaign account would like to use an image from United Way when creating their own marketing materials, the communications department must approve the use of the images to ensure it aligns with the use cases provided by and to the subject when their consent was originally obtained.

## Further reading

[Nonprofit Photography: Ethics and Approaches](#) by Margot Duane





## Stock Imagery

When United Way-generated images are not available, stock imagery may be used. Look for visuals that align with our brand values, voice, and tone.

- Avoid using images that appear staged, artificial, or overly posed. Whenever possible, source stock images that feature local people or places.
- Do not use a stock image in conjunction with a quote that is attributed to a participant, unless approved by the subject.
  - **For example:** If the participant has asked that their name be changed for privacy and wish to have a stock image used instead of their actual likeness.
- Avoid overuse of a stock image, such as using the same stock image for multiple pieces of content, as it might confuse the audience.

## Crediting sources

- Obtain all necessary licenses that come with purchased images you use (stock or otherwise).
- When possible, indicate that images are stock photography and credit the photographer.
  - **For example:** Photo by Adobe Stock





## Illustrations & Graphic Elements

Our approach is to always use photos first and only use illustrations where photos are not feasible, especially when depicting sensitive or triggering topics. When designing materials for United Way, consider the following guidelines.

Use soft, curved lines that emulate the curves in United Way's landmark. Lines should be:

- **Soft and Rounded:** Avoid sharp or angular lines; instead, opt for smooth, curved lines that appear more friendly and welcoming.
- **Varied Weights:** Using lines of varying weights can express a dynamic, inclusive community. Thicker lines can be seen as stronger and more supportive, while thinner lines might convey delicacy and attentiveness.
- **Organic Patterns:** Consider incorporating organic, free-flowing line patterns to represent connectivity, community, and support.

Avoid angular shapes. Shapes should include:

- **Circular Shapes:** Circles and ovals are often perceived as warm, whole, and inviting, embodying a sense of community and unity.
- **Soft Edges:** Shapes with softened or rounded corners are gentler and more approachable than those with sharp edges.
- **Balanced Composition:** Create compositions where shapes are harmoniously balanced, representing stability, equality, and inclusivity.
- Incorporate white space in between elements, creating a cleaner, minimalistic design.

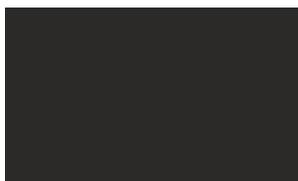
Avoid using too many colours. Stay with United Way's primary colour palette:



PMS 485  
C0 M95 Y100 K0  
R218 G41 B28  
#DA291C



PMS 425  
C0 M0 Y0 K77  
R112 G115 B114  
#54585A



PMS Process Black  
C0 M0 Y0 K100  
R44 G42 B41  
#2C2A29



White (for Reverse)  
C0 M0 Y0 K0  
R255 G255 B255  
#FFFFFF





**United Way**  
**Alberta Capital Region**