

Prepared by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors For Rockefeller Capital Management

March 24, 2020

As of Mid-March, COVID-19 is now a world-wide pandemic. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 145 countries around the globe are confronted with outbreaks of the virus. Here at home in the United States, multiple communities now live under declared states of emergency.

Fundamental to Philanthropy is the core belief that donors can and should be a force for good. Pandemics reveal the worst of the human condition - anxiety, fear, suffering and death. They also can have grave social and economic consequences that last well beyond the crisis period. As the impact of COVID-19 continues to unfold, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA) is at the forefront of an emerging conversation with both large foundations and private donors addressing the evolving needs facing communities across the country.

We believe this goes beyond traditional notions of disaster philanthropy to emphasize resilience funding that builds the resilience of individuals, families, and communities to weather the crisis under conditions of extreme uncertainty, volatility, and complexity. Accordingly, we are providing to the donor community preliminary guidance that we will update as the context shifts relating to key principles and general funding areas, including specific recommendations for donations.

For Rockefeller Capital Management, our thoughts below include key principles and general funding areas.

Critical Principles in Disaster Response

- **Give donations with as few restrictions as possible.** General operating support dollars are the single best way to equip everyone and every group affected right now.
- **Allocate support for the immediate and longer term.** The ripple effects of the pandemic will be far reaching and extensive. That means there will be plenty of short- and long-term opportunities for a donor to support what they care about.
- **Fund organizations that are already active and experienced with current capacity in providing services or conducting research for a public health and financial crisis.** A crisis is not the best time to help a program with no prior experience in the matter at hand start providing support for benefits applications. Look for organizations, like nonprofit hospitals, that are already adept at working with the public sector in the areas of need.
- **Prioritize funder collaboratives to get funding to nonprofits in larger amounts with a single grant vs a multitude of donations to acknowledge and track.** Big collaboratives can also scan the sector and allocate more efficiently.

COVID-19 Philanthropic Funding Areas

We are seeing donor interest in many areas but five come to the forefront:

- Health and medical needs;
- Social services and economic security;
- Support for small businesses at risk of closure;
- Educational support for students; and
- Region-specific funds.

The following is a list of organizations offering support services in one or more of these areas.

Health

Since its discovery, the coronavirus has made its way to nearly every continent putting lives at risk. For local, national and global responses to be effective they must have quality data about infection rates, good lines of communication across local, regional and national boundaries and not only sufficient resources, but also the right resources to combat the infection and save lives.

- [CDC Foundation](#) - Provides flexible funding that can support state and local health departments, logistics, communication and data management.
- [Partners in Health](#) - Taking global action to contain the spread of the virus and ensure that care is available for the most vulnerable.

Overall, RPA believes that sufficient resources are available for vaccine and anti-viral treatments. For those who see this as a priority nonetheless:

- [Gates Philanthropy Partners](#) - Has a research-focused fund that is accelerating the development of vaccines.

Social Services and Economic Security

In any emergency or national disaster situation, vulnerable or low-income communities suffer disproportionately. The pandemic is isolating the elderly and leaving them to fend for themselves at home. Many children who depend on school for their meals are at risk of going hungry. Low wage workers face the dilemma of putting their health at risk by going to work or losing income by staying home. Several organizations are working to address these related issues and ameliorate their impact on low income populations. In addition to local food banks, national organizations with local partners also focus on delivering healthy meals to those in need.

- [Share Our Strength](#) - Has a mission to end hunger in the U.S. and abroad. They have been active contributors of food after every major hurricane in the past decade and have a strong set of partners (from Walmart to Whole Foods). Their program [No Kid Hungry](#) is feeding school children who've lost access to meals.
- [Feeding America](#) - Is another national anti-hunger organization with significant capacity.
- [Meals on Wheels](#) - Is a national organization with several local chapters that deliver meals to homebound elderly.

- [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#) - Is providing emergency assistance to domestic workers that allows them to stay home and healthy with their families.
- [Food Bank For New York City](#) is the city's largest hunger-relief organization and centers on helping low-income New Yorkers overcome their circumstances and achieve greater independence.
- [Hunger Free America](#) is a movement to enact the policies and programs needed to end domestic hunger.

Small Business Help

Effective implementation of social distancing has resulted in the closure of many businesses, including small community-based enterprises like restaurants and cafes, as well as larger regional enterprises. Regardless of size, the business community is suffering, and several donors are interested in ensuring they have the capital or credit resources necessary to ride out this phase of the pandemic.

- [Opportunity Finance Network \(OFN\)](#) is a national network of community development financial institutions (CDFIs). These organizations help small businesses that would have trouble getting credit and business guidance from the mainstream banking industry. One of their leading small business lenders is the [Opportunity Fund](#) based in San Francisco, and the [CDFI Locator](#) can help you find an organization in your area, or you can contribute to the national fund which distributes capital to those organizations experiencing capital shortages based on increased demand.
- [Common Future](#) is a network of leaders building an equitable inclusive economy.
- [Restaurant Opportunity Center](#) is a nonprofit organization fighting to improve wages and working conditions for the nation's restaurant workforce.

Education and Student Support

In an attempt to contain the spread of the virus, schools across the country are closing and students are receiving remote online instruction. For poorer households with limited resources access to the internet is spotty at best. Even in cities like San Francisco and Seattle more than ten percent of households do not have broadband access. A recent report [Closing the Digital Divide](#) provides a sobering overview of broadband access by households. At the end of the report is a list of additional resources and organizations worthy of support.

- [The Emerson Collective](#) maintains a list of educational resources for remote learning. Each of the organizations delivering these services will benefit from donations that allow them to expand their capacity during this time.
- [Education Superhighway](#) is working with school districts to close the digital divide.

Regional Collaborative Giving

A number of strategic funds that pool resources to increase scale and potential impact in addressing the pandemic are emerging to support everything from frontline medical interventions to research for a vaccine. The advantage of granting to a fund include shared risk, access to dedicated professionals who direct resources to the most important needs, and avoiding duplication of effort.

- Look for community foundations that are brokering public/private partnerships to leverage investments. A prime example of this is the [rapid response fund](#) of the Seattle Foundation that focuses on needs in King County where the virus first struck hardest in the United States.
- In the Bay Area, the major community foundations have created funds to address local needs. These include the East Bay Community Foundation's [COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund](#).
- Major New York City based foundations, including Ford and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, are supporting a collaborative fund at the [New York Community Trust](#) with an initial allocation of at least \$25 million.
- Other good local choices for New Yorkers for access to food are the [Food Bank of New York City](#) and [City Harvest](#). Both of these organizations distribute food to a network of agencies and feeding programs throughout the five boroughs.
- For other communities, we recommend turning to the local community foundation. Community foundations already fund local social service organizations, and so they have strong bases of knowledge, experience with partnerships, and good networks for crisis management. In addition, The [Giving Compass](#) has assembled a list of coronavirus focused funds that have emerged.

For More Information

More detailed information about collaborative giving is included in RPA's guides:

[Collaborative Giving](#)

[Center for Disaster Philanthropy](#)