



National
Philanthropic
Trust



How Our Philanthropic Partners Are Leading Through COVID-19

By Andrea Rush, Senior Vice President of Philanthropic Services

As fatalities rise and millions of people become unemployed, finding hope amid this crisis is not easy. Yet in my role at National Philanthropic Trust, I am greatly encouraged by the commitment to helping others that I witness daily. Our donors are recommending grants—from \$250 to help feed children no longer receiving free school lunches to \$100,000 to further virology research—at a vigorous pace. We experienced the busiest April in our nearly 25-year history, with the number of grants surging 85 percent over the previous April and the dollar amount soaring 107 percent.

Of course, I know that it will take more than generosity to help us solve the problems created by this pandemic. We need bold and determined philanthropic leadership and coordinated and targeted efforts. That's one reason I find so much hope in the work our partners—including hundreds of [community foundations](#) across the country and other nonprofit organizations—are doing.

Our friends at Blue Meridian Partners, for instance, have been bringing investors and social sector leaders together for years to scale promising solutions to problems that trap people in poverty. Today, in a move that demonstrates flexibility in addressing current needs, they are deploying \$100 million in COVID-19 emergency relief to help people throughout the U.S. who are at greatest risk for falling through the cracks. These funds will provide vulnerable individuals and families with direct cash assistance and will enable local organizations to help those in underserved communities navigate the process for obtaining public aid. Donors interested in collaborating with Blue Meridian Partners can find more information [here](#).

Other philanthropic partners have identified at-risk communities as well, and they are bringing swift, direct support. A new initiative called [The Plate Fund](#)—supported by the Schultz Family Foundation, the Seattle Foundation, and scores of individual restaurant owners and other donors—is meeting the needs of restaurant workers in King County, Washington, which includes the greater Seattle area. As one of the first U.S. communities affected by COVID-19, King County has experienced steep and prolonged job losses. The new fund, which accepts contributions from the public, provides \$500 grants in immediate financial assistance to impacted restaurant workers. To ensure that relief assistance continues to reach workers with the greatest need, including those who may not be eligible for government assistance due to immigration status or other issues, The Plate Fund has assembled a network of community partners to help distribute the funding. So far, it has raised \$7 million to reach 14,000 area restaurant workers.

While Blue Meridian Partners and The Plate Fund address the economic fallout of COVID-19, other organizations are working to stop the spread of the virus. Our colleagues at Gates Philanthropy Partners, which supports the grantee partners of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, have established the [Combating COVID-19 Fund](#). This fund, which accepts contributions from individual donors, supports leading scientific organizations working to develop therapeutics, diagnostic tests and vaccines. It also supports the work of leaders and organizations in Africa and South Asia to prepare healthcare systems and protect vulnerable populations.

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The work that these philanthropic organizations are undertaking will resonate far beyond the present moment—giving me more reason to hope. For while we cannot go back in time to prevent the initial crisis, we can take steps today to limit its impact and be better prepared for future challenges.

As always, NPT stands ready to help you help others. Please contact us at (888) 878-7900 or npt@npitrust.org with any questions.

Andrea Rush is Senior Vice President of Philanthropic Services and has more than 17 years of experience handling all aspects of philanthropic and specialized grantmaking services, including direct international grants and grant agreements.

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