



## *How to Give in 2020*

*By Joan Allmaras, Philanthropic Services Specialist*

2020 has been a year of instability and unique challenges. In the midst of a global [pandemic](#) and US presidential election year, communities across the country are fighting for [racial justice](#) and battling [wildfires](#) and hurricanes. Donors around the world have stepped up to meet these new needs while continuing to support the causes and organizations they care about most.

Through the first nine months of the year, NPT's donors recommended 40% more grants and doubled the dollar amount, compared to 2019. Grants supported a range of needs, such as local food banks, virtual learning resources for students and scientific research in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak; organizations tackling systemic racism and injustice; voter registration and election access efforts; and immediate and long-term recovery needs from natural disasters around the world. A large percentage of those grants were unrestricted, giving charities the flexibility to address their most critical needs—and opportunities—as they evolved.

Yet even with increased grantmaking, many of the [issues facing charities](#) earlier in the year have not disappeared and are expected to continue well into 2021. It is understandable that donors may feel overwhelmed, fatigued, or even paralyzed when thinking about where to start. Here are a few steps when thinking about how to give in 2020.

- 1. Reflect on the year.** This was a year of surprises, with new needs arising in unexpected places. Your charitable priorities may also have shifted in response to these new changes. You may be supporting new kinds of organizations you haven't supported before, such as local food banks. Consider how your giving habits and strategies have changed this year. Was this just a deviation from your normal giving practice? Or will you want to carry those strategies forward as part of an evergreen giving strategy?
- 2. Get to know your grantees.** The best way to see if an organization fits with your charitable priorities is to do a little research. When you visit a nonprofit's website to learn about their work, take the time to familiarize yourself not just with their mission—what they say they do—but also their theory of change for how they will accomplish their goals. Looking at their social media channels may provide information about some of their day-to-day operations, and reviewing their Annual Report offers a sense of their fiscal position and long-term sustainability.
- 3. Practice trust-based philanthropy.** After you think about the causes close to your heart and have conducted some research to find organizations whose strategies you believe in, put that trust to good use. Contact nonprofit organizations that you already support, or have granted to earlier in the year, to find out what is most needed right now. For example, organizations you may have provided with program support in the past may now be asking for general operating support, due to increased need for flexible spending. Try developing trust-based relationships with your favorite nonprofits.

## How to Give in 2020 (continued)

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**4. Seek local expertise.** If you are having trouble identifying specific nonprofits as part of your own giving strategy, [community foundations](#) are a great resource for information on the best organizations operating within your area. Community foundations are uniquely positioned to address immediate needs of the neighborhoods they serve. Many have established funds specifically focused on racial justice, COVID-19 relief and recovery from natural disasters. The Council on Foundations can help you find your local community foundation, or ways to support a particular geographic location.

Many donors will spend the coming months reflecting on the year and planning for the one to come—hopefully using some of the tips we outlined above. As we approach Giving Tuesday and as 2020 comes to an end, there remain many opportunities for donors to make a difference in their communities and around the world.

**NPT is here to help.**

A donor-advised fund is uniquely positioned to help you give. It is easy to set up a recurring grant recommendation to ensure your charity of choice receives continued support, and NPT handles the [due diligence](#) necessary to ensure that the organization you wish to support—whether local or global—is a qualified charity.

If you're not sure where to start, our [Philanthropic Services](#) team can help you determine your giving goals. We're here to help you help others.

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