



A Message From Our CEO: A Look at Grantmaking in 2020

By Eileen R. Heisman, President & CEO

Looking back on 2020, I am inspired by the power of giving we have experienced. Without a doubt, 2020 will be remembered for its complex challenges—a global health pandemic, an amplified fight for racial equity and a polarized political environment. While this has been a challenging year, it was also a promising year as donors were passionately inspired to give. Our donors made remarkable commitments to charitable causes around the country and the world throughout the year.

In March, I wrote about how the [world was innovating in a time of crisis](#) during COVID-19. In the months since, we did. We learned more about how COVID-19 affected the human body and we watched as vaccines were developed in record times. Our world had other challenges: wildfires, unemployment and food insecurity to name a few. As we witnessed violence captured on cell phones and spread through social media, people around the world mobilized to amplify the need for racial equity and social justice. Throughout it all, our donors' generosity has continued to ignite hope. So much has been uncertain, yet many donors have responded in powerful ways.

Spurred by the events of the year, donors were overwhelmingly committed to philanthropy. It was heartening. Grantmaking from donor-advised funds through October 31 increased by 97 percent compared to 2019. Similarly, the number of grants increased by 37 percent over the same time.

Donors shifted giving strategies in light of new challenges, but also remained committed to their past grantees. In the midst of a huge increase in giving to humanitarian aid, one donor who has historically supported wildlife causes gave \$250,000 to protect elephants and conserve the ecosystem.

We had other landmark statistics in our grantmaking:

- We experienced a 192 percent increase in grants to human services compared to the same time last year, a change we attribute primarily to COVID-19. One donor recommended a \$2,000,000 grant to accelerate scientific discovery and development of COVID-19 treatments and vaccines.
- Our donors recommended a 105 percent increase in grants to education, including one for \$250,000 to support public K-12 education through remote learning while schools are closed in California.
- The public/social benefit category grants increased by 165 percent in grant dollars, including \$50,000 to bring fresh, nutritious food to communities experiencing food insecurity during the pandemic.

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Grant support skyrocketed to organizations whose missions focus on the environment, animals, arts and culture. Over the course of the year, we approved:

- A \$50,000 grant providing relief for a local art museum closed for social distancing in Florida.
- A \$40,000 grant providing camping and hiking opportunities for people with disabilities.
- A \$3,000 grant supporting a music, dance and theater center in Vermont facing financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Charities rely on the financial support of donors who find meaning in their missions. In 2021, we predict that evolving needs—some short-term, some long-term—will bring attention to new causes for our donors. We encourage you to support the causes you care about this holiday season, and to give without programmatic restrictions.

It is not too late to give in 2020. Contribution deadlines are quickly approaching, and NPT stands ready to assist you. Our [Giving Season Central](#) page highlights contribution and grant deadlines. Please reference this useful resource before making tax-deductible donations and/or recommending a grant. For information about COVID-19-related causes, our [COVID-19 Response and Resources](#) page is an excellent resource.

National Philanthropic Trust is here to facilitate your charitable giving, just as we always have been. Call us at (888) 878-7900 or email us at npt@npitrust.org.

Throughout this challenging year, and as always, we are proud to be your partner in giving.

Eileen R. Heisman, ACFRE, is the President and CEO of NPT. She is a nationally recognized expert on charitable and planned giving. Ms. Heisman has been named seven times by NonProfit Times as one of their Power and Influence Top 50, most recently in 2020.

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