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After Focusing on Urgent Needs, Community Crisis Fund Expands Funding to Reopening and Priority Populations

The Community Crisis Fund, which has distributed nearly \$2.9 million in grants since March for emergency and basic needs, is moving into a new phase of funding to support nonprofit organizations experiencing severe financial hardship because of costs associated with reopening or maintaining safe operations.

This move is a natural next step for the Community Crisis Fund, mobilized by Rochester Area Community Foundation and United Way of Greater Rochester when the COVID-19 pandemic forced a statewide shutdown. This shift aligns with similar funds established in other parts of the country that are changing the focus of funding to address reopening and recovery.

Starting today, the Community Crisis Fund is moving into Phase 2 with goals of:

- Supporting and fortifying nonprofits or resident-led community groups serving priority populations that include Black, Latinx, refugees, migrants, rural communities, people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities, and older adults;
- Advancing efforts to create more equitable outcomes for these populations; and
- Alleviating the burden on nonprofits for uncovered costs for personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies needed to remain open or reopen safely.

Priority status will be given to grant requests from organizations:

- Led by people of color and/or have staff and board leadership reflecting the communities they serve, and that provide opportunities for consumers to take on decision-making roles; and
- Demonstrating that at least 75 percent of recipients fall within the priority populations.

“This shift in funding is critical to stabilizing our region and returning to whatever the new normal will be,” said Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO of the Community Foundation. “We also need to continue to focus on ways to help our neighbors of color whose lives have been severely disrupted by all that has happened.”

“While we have slowly begun to reopen, the crisis is not over and the impacts of COVID-19 will be long-lasting,” said Jaime Saunders, president and CEO of United Way. “The Community Crisis Fund is built by and for our community to weather this storm by providing support to our vital nonprofits to fortify their operations and help them continue their important work during this most critical time.”

Phase 1 funding addressed the immediate needs of economically vulnerable populations most affected by pandemic-related closures and focused on the areas of health, human services, food, and support for front-line responders. More than 100 of the 154 grants were for providing food and hygiene/sanitation supplies, such as hand sanitizer and personal protective equipment (PPE).

The Community Crisis Fund’s Governance Committee, which includes representatives from the Community Foundation, United Way and other key funders, has met several days each week since the fund was launched to review grant applications. Applications for Phase 1 funding will continue to be accepted and reviewed regularly to rapidly deploy funds to nonprofits.

Phase 2 grant applications will be due on the third Friday of every month, starting August 21. For this phase, the Community Crisis Fund is intended to be “funding of last resort,” meaning that organizations will need to confirm they have not also received financial support or reimbursement from other sources for the requested expenses.

For Phase 2, the committee also will take into consideration indicators of each applicant’s financial stability based on the Community Foundation’s Equity Impact Platform (EquiP) provided by BCT Partners from Newark, N.J. This new tool uses several sources of data to identify communities that have the greatest need, prioritizing marginalized communities, as well as nonprofits that can make the most substantial impact during COVID-19.

For more information about Phase 2 funding parameters or to apply, visit bit.ly/CrisisFunding2 or the Community Foundation and United Way websites.