



**For information**  
Mary F. Holleran  
Rochester Area Community Foundation  
[mholleran@racf.org](mailto:mholleran@racf.org) or 585.341.4351

Michelle Kraft  
United Way of Greater Rochester  
[michelle.kraft@uwrochester.org](mailto:michelle.kraft@uwrochester.org) or 585.576.6511

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 16, 2020

## **Community Crisis Fund Accepting Final 2020 Grant Applications Until November 20**

The Community Crisis Fund, which has awarded \$6.1 million in grants to nonprofit organizations since late March to help our region during the COVID-19 pandemic, will accept the last applications of 2020 through November 20.

Thus far, 174 nonprofits in the nine-county Greater Rochester and Finger Lakes region received grant support to continue providing crucial services and respond to additional needs during the pandemic.

“Unlike other cities that exhausted their pandemic-related funds within a few months, we wanted the support of the Community Crisis Fund to last through those tough early months and into the first phase of recovery,” says Matthew A. Kuhlenbeck, president and CEO of Greater Rochester Health Foundation.

The November 20 deadline will allow the Community Crisis Fund’s Governance Committee, comprised of representatives of several local funders, to review additional applications and determine how the Fund’s remaining dollars will be distributed.

“One bright spot from the pandemic is the way our community has collaborated on solutions to very new and immediate challenges,” says Jaime Saunders, president & CEO of United Way of Greater Rochester. “This group of dedicated funders and community stakeholders will continue to work together to evaluate and respond to our community’s ever-changing needs.”

The final 2020 grants will be awarded in early December, and if additional funds remain, nonprofits engaged in innovative projects providing streamlined services to address the impact of COVID-19 would be invited to apply. The Community Crisis Fund Governance Committee will continue to advocate for support for the entire region.

“This application deadline does not mean our work is done. We are still in the midst of a crisis and the local philanthropic organizations are committed to providing the financial support and advocacy needed to keep our region strong,” says Simeon Banister, vice president of community programs at the Community Foundation and co-chair of the fund’s Governance Committee.

ESL was the lead contributor to the Community Crisis Fund with grants totaling \$2.4 million, including a match to local funders to encourage continued support.

“The Crisis Fund has been a vital lifeline for organizations as we navigate the ongoing pandemic and the difficulties it has created for thousands in our community. Without this fund and its continued support, many of the essential services provided by nonprofits during these critical times would not be available to our community members in need,” says Faheem Masood, president and CEO of ESL Federal Credit Union.

Over the past eight months, the Governance Committee involved in reviewing Community Crisis Fund applications daily from March through July, developed an understanding of the depth of the needs. As a result, each organization modified its own funds or processes or launched new initiatives to address issues directly related to their organization’s mission. For example:

- United Way recognized an emergency need at the beginning of the pandemic and quickly rallied local funders to provide 10,000 meal boxes and made it easy for community members to give their time or in-kind donations — like homemade face coverings — by activating an online volunteer platform called Volunteer United.
- The Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation continued to make its grant application and reporting requirements easier and more streamlined. In some cases a site visit or check-in meeting took the place of a written report.
- When students’ remote learning uncovered a glaring gap in access to technology, the Community Foundation launched a COVID Education Fund to get computers and WiFi hot spots into the hands of students in City School District, a charter school, and six high-needs districts in Wayne County.

The Community Crisis Fund application can be accessed at [bit.ly/CrisisFunding2](https://bit.ly/CrisisFunding2).

### **Background on the Community Crisis Fund:**

United Way of Greater Rochester and Rochester Area Community Foundation together launched the Community Crisis Fund in mid-March with the goal of rapidly deploying flexible resources to nonprofits disproportionately affected by COVID-19 to address the economic consequences of the outbreak, organizational recovery, and future emergency needs. Within the first week, the fund received immediate commitments of more than \$2.3 million. And over the months, the fund continued to grow with donations totaling \$6,529,976 from local foundations, businesses, institutions and thousands of individuals.

For more than four months, grants were awarded to meet emergency and basic needs of nonprofit human service organizations. The purchase of essential personal protective equipment (PPE) was a big investment — more than 525,000 pieces — to allow workers on the front lines to stay safe while working. Addressing hunger and lack of access to food across the region was also a top priority.

In August, the Crisis Fund began a new phase of funding to support nonprofit organizations with costs related to reopening or maintaining safe operations and those that serve priority populations or are led by Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).

As of mid-November, the Crisis Fund had awarded 257 grants totaling \$6.1 million to 174 nonprofits in the nine-county Greater Rochester-Finger Lakes region.