

Kansas City Regional COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund

Advisory Board Report to Funders and the Community

Disruption and Devastation

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in Kansas City as in much of America, disrupting virtually every aspect of society. Widespread job loss, shuttered small businesses, reduced child care, shifts to online learning and work, illness and death of loved ones, loss of social connection, lack of necessary public health resources and many other impacts all coincided, creating a sudden new reality for our communities and our region.

These disruptions were devastating for many people and families across the region – even more so in Black and brown communities. Unstable housing, food insecurity, domestic violence, mental and behavioral health challenges, lack of access to appropriate medical services and social isolation became real consequences essentially overnight.

A Community Responds

Philanthropic leaders quickly stepped forward to respond to this unforeseen and urgent crisis. Key funders, notably the Hall Family Foundation and Sunderland Foundation, made significant commitments of resources and challenged others to come forward. Twenty-six more founding partners responded immediately and, in the following weeks, over 60 other companies and philanthropies made significant contributions (see Appendix A). Funders not only generously redirected their resources but also turned over decisions to others, demonstrating trust in the power of community-driven grant-making.

Residents across the region also responded quickly and generously to the OneKC Day of Giving organized by area media, which raised some \$2 million in small donations, demonstrating the compassion and spirit of our regional community. In all, over \$16 million was assembled in a matter of weeks, increasing to nearly \$18 million by the end of 2020.

At the same time, four organizing partners — the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, United Way of Greater Kansas City, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Greater Kansas City and the Mid-America Regional Council — began seeing the urgent needs across the region become evident almost overnight. Within a few meetings, the partners organized a process in cooperation with the founding funders to manage resources, accept proposals and disperse funds in a quick, efficient manner. Within two weeks of initial communications between the organizing partners, a survey was conducted of nearly 240 social service providers about anticipated needs, the fund was created, a structure established, generous funders committed an initial \$5 million challenge and the effort was publicly announced on March 24, 2020.

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The organizers also enlisted a diverse group of advisors that included community members, funders and the four organizing partners to make sure decisions were well informed and inclusive. Members of the fund's advisory board devoted countless hours over the last year to analyzing needs, assessing requests for funding and listening to each other and to community voices to ensure funding has the most impact.

The regional community has often collaborated on key funding goals, but this effort was unprecedented on many levels, from the scale and urgency of human needs facing the community, the wide geographic impact and the number of large and small donors to the speed at which funds were assembled, the range of organizations funded and the inclusivity of community voices in decision making. In short, this is a story of generosity and collaboration that has touched the lives of countless Kansas Citizens.

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Grant-Making Process

In March 2020, the fund organizers utilized email lists, social and local media outlets, word of mouth and advisory board recommendations to solicit requests for funding. Aware of the unprecedented strain on organizations because of the sudden onset of the pandemic, the advisory board intentionally made the application process uncomplicated, without strict designated funding parameters. They understood that organizations would need flexibility to meet individual organization needs, and that the advisory board had confidence in the expertise and judgment of the agencies in how to best accomplish their goals.

In recognition of these realities, the fund was intentionally designed to incorporate national best practices in disaster philanthropy and to apply an equity lens to the process, in recognition of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on low-income communities and communities of color. Core aspects of the design of the fund included a 20-member advisory board that centered those closest to these communities in the decision-making process, a streamlined application and reporting process to remove barriers and increase access in impacted communities, and general operating support to allow organizations to respond to the rapidly changing needs of their clients.

The fund received some 600 applications for funding, a reflection of the dire needs across our region. Members of the advisory board volunteered to review these applications and rate them according to their capacity to reach people with the greatest needs, ensuring equity and a commitment to diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, age, geographic areas served and type of services to be provided.

Report on Investments

The Kansas City Regional COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund has provided more than \$17 million to over 300 organizations across the Kansas City region in three phases:

1. Urgent Needs (\$10.4 million)

Made in quick order in spring and summer 2020, the first five rounds of grants totaling \$10.4 million were invested in some 260 organizations responding to urgent health and human service

needs, including housing (rent, mortgage and utilities), food insecurity, health care, child care, employment supports, mental and behavioral health, domestic violence shelter, as well as other critical human services.

Grants were made to organizations across the metropolitan area, including well-known anchor human service agencies that serve large populations and a wide range of trusted community-based organizations highly connected to particular localities across the region, especially communities of color disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. A complete list of grantees is available online at <https://www.growyourgiving.org/covid-grants/>.

Examples of grantees include:

- **Harvesters - The Community Food Network:** Increased food distribution to hundreds of food pantries, community kitchens, community shelters, as well as “mega mobile distribution,” including after-school and summer meal programs. Awarded \$300,000 (total of two awards).
- **Angels of Grace Family Service Center:** Enabled emergency utilities, medical and nutritional supports for 59 families in Kansas City, Kansas, urban neighborhoods. Awarded \$15,000.
- **Hope Network of Raytown:** Provided rent, utility assistance, clothing and healthy pantry food for dozens of families. Awarded \$20,000.
- **Guadalupe Centers:** Provided food, utilities, rent and mortgage support to over 1,400 individuals and 270 households, largely Hispanic women, including 271 COVID-19 positive individuals. Awarded \$100,000.
- **Kearney Enrichment Council:** Provided food pantry delivery to homebound families and seniors, drive-through services for seniors, “care calls” to check in with seniors and assist with social isolation, and delivery of STEM kits to students. Awarded \$5,000.
- **Kids TLC:** Enabled services to both children with autism and children in inpatient and outpatient treatment for in-home care and safe clinical care. Awarded \$50,000.
- **Artists Helping the Homeless:** Provided shelter-in-place services for COVID-19 positive homeless individuals discharged from hospitals and detoxification centers. Awarded \$50,000.
- **Rose Brooks Center:** Provided homeless services to people experiencing domestic violence, including shelter in extended-stay hotels, education, retrofitting rooms and permanent housing assistance, personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies and hotline calls. Awarded \$150,000 (total of two awards).

2. Collaborative Partnerships (\$4.2 million)

In summer 2020, as it became apparent the pandemic would continue well beyond initial expectations, the advisory board focused on broad collaborative partnerships that leveraged other public and private funds and addressed critical COVID-19 response and recovery needs. The advisory board identified priority areas for investment by utilizing available data on the disproportionate impact the pandemic was having among particular communities and issues, as well as by consulting with key community organizations working in these areas. The fund ultimately invested in the following broad collaborative partnerships:

- **Wyandotte Public Health Initiative:** A partnership to increase testing, tracing and wraparound services for vulnerable populations in Wyandotte County, engaging trusted,

community-based organizations to increase access to testing in Black and Latinx communities and provide assistance to those individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed to the virus. Led by Wyandotte County Health Department. Awarded \$750,000.

- **Regional Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Strategy:** A regional partnership involving legal, social service and community coordinating agencies in a comprehensive and connected strategy to prevent evictions and foreclosures, including financial assistance, legal representation, case management, landlord and lender negotiations, housing location services and other essential support systems. Coordinated by United Way of Greater Kansas City. Awarded \$1 million.
- **KC Regional Public Health Action Agenda:** A multi-faceted regional strategy developed by area public health directors to augment local coronavirus response efforts, including COVID-19 testing teams focusing on highly impacted communities, at-risk individuals and essential workers; emergency support for individuals affected by COVID-19; prevention and outreach activities focusing on targeted communities; and assisting local community services agencies with the purchase of personal protective equipment for workers and clients. Coordinated by the Mid-America Regional Council. Awarded \$500,000.
- **Digital Access Coalition:** A regional partnership to broaden digital access and support systems to enhance economic opportunity and remote learning support systems in targeted communities, including providing technology, training, internet connections to support education, telehealth, access to resources and employment. Partners include Literacy KC, SchoolSmart KC, PCs for People, Mid-America Assistance Coalition and Kansas City Public Library. Awarded \$751,530.
- **Childcare and Out-of-School Support Collaborative:** A collaborative of community service agencies to provide safe, supervised learning environments for students who are not able to attend school in person. Coordinated by Turn The Page KC in partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Kansas City, YMCA of Greater Kansas City, Camp Fire Heartland, The Upper Room and the school districts of Kansas City, Center and Hickman Mills in Missouri, Kansas City Charter Schools and the Kansas City, Kansas, Public Schools. Awarded \$1.2 million.

The fund was highly successful in leveraging public and other funds. Many of the fund investments, particularly those that were part of broad community collaboratives, were an important impetus for attracting and coordinating other funds, notably from public organizations administering CARES Act resources. The investment in collaborative initiatives has also created the capacity to more effectively deploy subsequent public appropriations and positions the region well for future stimulus programs.

A prime example is the fund's investment of \$1 million in the Regional Eviction and Foreclosure Project, which helped in 2020 to leverage \$4.5 million in federal CARES Act funds administered by local governments. These dollars had not been specifically earmarked for eviction prevention by federal laws but were committed by local officials in large part because of the availability of local philanthropic commitments marshalled around the eviction crisis. Beyond public funding, there has been \$1.5 million in additional resources

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committed by three local sources for the eviction prevention collaborative, enabling the work to continue through 2021.

These initial investments — and the work they have made possible — demonstrated the effectiveness of a large-scale eviction prevention effort, which has positioned our region to effectively deploy tens of millions of dollars made available by Congress in the most recent stimulus package, including federal eviction prevention resources totaling \$29 million managed locally (in Kansas City, Missouri, and Jackson and Clay counties) and an additional \$50 million to \$75 million that will be invested in the region by programs run by the states of Missouri and Kansas through the end of 2021.

The **most common services requested** by nonprofit agencies across the region highlight the story of the greatest needs that arose in the early months of the pandemic:

- Mobile distribution of food boxes, homebound delivery of hot meals, to-go meals for kids and increasing the number of food pick-up locations and the volume of food required to meet growing needs.
- Rent, utility and housing supports.
- Equipment to support virtual telehealth for physical, mental and behavioral health services.
- School activity kits, computers, internet and infrastructure to support the transition to online learning.
- Personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies.
- Child care.
- Retrofitting rooms to accommodate Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and supporting bed nights in shelters and hotels.
- Hygiene kits and baby supplies.
- Medication and prescription support.
- Community-based testing and contact tracing partnerships.
- Staff and operating costs.

Recipients of these services represented a diversity of age, gender, region, race, language and service provided. It was also noted in summary reports that many organizations charted new efforts to work together to increase impact through their newly developed partnering efforts.

3. Continuing Pressing Needs (\$2.4 million)

In October 2020, the advisory board identified a narrower scope based on the critical needs, which were being elevated as the pandemic continued to rage on far longer than originally anticipated. The advisory board agreed to support applications focused specifically on behavioral health, food insecurity and domestic violence.

A series of focus groups were convened under these three areas. Experts and agency leaders serving in these sectors advised members of the advisory board on their greatest gaps and needs related to COVID-19.

In January 2021, an additional 67 organizations were funded under these categories, expending the remaining nearly \$3 million in the Kansas City Regional COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. Here is an overview:

- **Behavioral health:** Twenty-seven organizations were awarded grants totaling \$855,000, primarily to community mental health centers, federally qualified health centers and organizations serving Spanish-speaking populations and individuals experiencing addiction, and child- and youth-targeted services and services in rural communities.
- **Food insecurity:** Thirty-three organizations were awarded grants totaling \$792,000, focusing 70 percent in low-income, Black and brown communities and 30 percent in the suburban metropolitan area.
- **Domestic violence:** Seven organizations were awarded grants totaling \$750,000 to address a significant increase in the level of violence perpetrated during the pandemic, the reduction in available beds due to CDC guidelines and the innovative use of hotels and rental space to meet the increase in safety needs.

Status of Fund

As of March 2021, the Kansas City Regional COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund assembled \$17.9 million, which has been invested or is programmed to be invested in 2021. Funders and the advisory board are examining the value of pooling resources to ensure an effective response to continuing needs in the community.

Lesson Learned So Far

The advisory board believes the fund has been a powerful and effective tool that has alleviated the devastating impacts of the pandemic for countless Kansas Citians. The following lessons learned from this effort may be helpful in addressing continuing impacts of the pandemic, as well as future civic efforts to address critical human service needs.

The power of collaboration. The collaborative nature of the fund — from pooling financial resources to shared administration across the organizing partners for engaged and open decision-making — produced outcomes that would not have been possible otherwise. The process enabled widespread urgent needs to be considered in an efficient, strategic and equitable manner. The process allowed funding to coalesce around the needs of the community, not particular agencies or leaders. The organizing partners and advisory board members were able to combine their unique strengths, capabilities, relationships and insights to support an effective process. The process avoided duplication in funding efforts, minimized confusion and maximized simplicity for the organizations seeking funds. The fund also enabled investments in strategic partnerships to leverage the resources and capabilities of service agencies, local governments and federal programs.

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The importance of community voices. We have learned the importance of a *community-led process* grounded in the belief that those closest to the issue are in the best position to identify needs and inform solutions. The process was significantly enhanced by the engagement of community voices on the advisory board, as well as by enlisting community residents, experts and agencies in understanding needs, service gaps and the most effective means to respond. The fund was successful in advancing the principles of trust-based philanthropy and investing in

general operating support with wide operational discretion, concepts that can help philanthropy be more responsive and achieve better outcomes.

The significance of community organizations. The Kansas City community is indebted to the many nonprofit organizations that provide critical services and support across our region, often with minimal resources. These organizations were heavily tested over the past year and, in many cases, have been heroic in their response. We are pleased the open funding process enabled investment in small, more targeted organizations that are not well known and often overlooked. Instead of focusing on the organizations that have the largest number of clients served, the fund has been able to focus on those organizations that can reach certain pockets of our community most effectively. In fact, the effectiveness of many of the grants relied on critical partnerships with trusted, community-based agencies essential to reaching many communities, especially Black, brown, low-income and non-English speaking populations. For many of these organizations, this represented the first time they have received a grant from a foundation. We have witnessed the incredible strength, innovation and tenacity of organizations around our region to adapt to unexpected and significant disruptions to normal business practice to meet the needs of the vulnerable populations they serve.

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The importance of applying a racial equity lens. While the pandemic has devastated our region, communities of color have been disproportionately impacted. Recognizing that these communities face unique challenges and barriers, we created the space to have specific conversations about racial disparities that informed both our responsive grant-making and the design of the partnership collaborations.

Extensive needs persist. We have also learned there are extensive needs that remain as the pandemic persists and we begin to plan for longer-term recovery. Some areas have become evident as needing sustained attention, including food insecurity, homelessness and housing instability, digital access, health care access and mental health. Ensuring vaccination and access to testing services in hard-to-reach communities will be critical for the foreseeable future. Over time, attention will need to be given to supporting displaced workers and creating broader economic mobility.

More community capacity is needed. It has become apparent that many of the issues we face as a region will require new community capacity. For instance, the lack of mental health service capacity is a significant barrier to improving health outcomes, and improved food security depends not only on food supply but also on stronger food distribution networks. We hope the experience of the last year demonstrates the value of engaging broad stakeholders in an organized, collaborative process to strengthen how we make decisions and to strategically invest in partnerships and systems that have greater impact.

Appendix A: Kansas City Regional COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund

Major Funders

Thank you to the following major funders and the thousands of individual donors who have collectively raised more than \$17 million to support the Kansas City region during this critical time of need.

A very special thank you to the Hall Family Foundation and the Sunderland Foundation for partnering on challenge grants that matched donations to the fund up to \$6 million.

Founding Funders

- Black & Veatch
- Bukaty Companies
- Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
- George K. Baum Family Foundation
- Greater Kansas City Community Foundation
- H & R Block Foundation
- Hall Family Foundation
- Health Forward Foundation
- JE Dunn Construction
- Kansas City Chiefs
- Kansas City Royals
- Kansas City Southern
- Mallouk Family Foundation
- Marion and Henry Bloch Family Foundation
- Mazuma Credit Union
- Menorah Heritage Foundation
- Mike and Linda Lyon
- Patterson Family Foundation
- REACH Healthcare Foundation
- Richard and Annette Bloch Family Foundation
- Sherman Family Foundation
- The Sosland Foundation
- Stanley H. Durwood Foundation
- Sunderland Foundation
- UMB Bank
- United Way of Greater Kansas City
- The Vivian and Hymie Sosland Charitable Trust
- William T. Kemper Foundation – Commerce Bank, Trustee

Challenge Funders

- Academy Bank
- Ash Grove Charitable Foundation
- Bank of America
- Bank of Blue Valley
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City
- The Abe & Anna Bograd Memorial Trust

- Burns & McDonnell Foundation
- Cerner Foundation, First Hand
- Commerce Bancshares Foundation
- CommunityAmerica Foundation
- Compass Minerals
- Coventry Family Foundation
- Cloud L. Cray Foundation
- CVS Health
- The DeBruce Foundation and Paul and Linda DeBruce
- The Ronald D. Deffenbaugh Foundation
- Deloitte
- Delta Dental of Missouri
- Ann and Gary Dickinson Family Charitable Foundation
- Dave and Dee Dillon Charitable Fund
- Kevin A. Dunn Charitable Foundation
- Evergy
- Feist Charitable Foundation
- Francis Family Foundation
- Gautreaux Family Fund
- GEHA
- General Motors
- The Granary Fund in memory of Pat and Cliff Jones
- Gray Family Foundation
- Hearst Foundations
- Hulston Family Foundation
- The Humana Foundation
- Humana Inc.
- JDC Family Foundation
- Jedel Family Foundation
- JMW & Associates, LLC
- Jeffrey and Margaret Jones Family Foundation
- Kansas Gas Service, a Division of ONE Gas
- Kao Family Foundation
- Kiewit
- Miller Hammond Charitable Fund
- Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation
- William G. McGowan Charitable Fund
- Tim and Elin Murphy Family Foundation
- Parris Communications
- The Pfizer Foundation
- PNC Foundation
- Price Brothers Charitable Foundation
- Steve and Carole Price Charitable Foundation
- PWC Charitable Foundation
- Riggs Family Charitable Fund
- Stuart A. Schlemmer Charitable Fund
- Shumaker Family Foundation
- John W. & Effie E. Speas Memorial Trust, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee

- Tension Envelope Corporation
- TruckMovers
- U.S. Bank
- VanTrust Real Estate
- Mr. and Mrs. Isidor Wachstein & their son Julius & Thau Family Trust Fund
- Waddell & Reed Financial, Inc.
- Michael A. Waterford Fund
- Wells Fargo

Challenge Funders and Founding Funders contributed a minimum of \$25,000.

Advisory Board

- Mayra Aguirre, Hall Family Foundation
- Julie Brewer, United Community Services of Johnson County
- Rita Cortes, Menorah Heritage Foundation
- Micah Rose Emerson, Community Representative
- Carla Gibson, REACH Healthcare Foundation
- Geoff Jolley, LISC Greater Kansas City
- Jan Kauk, North Kansas City School Board of Education
- Randy Lopez, The Wyandotte Health Foundation
- Jim MacDonald, United Way of Greater Kansas City
- McClain Bryant Macklin, Civic Council of Greater Kansas City/Health Forward Foundation
- Maureen Mahoney, Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas
- Denise St. Omer, Greater Kansas City Community Foundation
- Rachel Russell, Community Representative
- Debbie Sosland-Edelman, The Sosland Foundation
- Carrie Stewart, William T Kemper Foundation, Commerce Bank Trustee
- Qiana Thomason, Health Forward Foundation
- Randy Vance, Sunderland Foundation
- David Warm, Moderator, Mid-America Regional Council
- Michele Watley, Shirley's Kitchen Cabinet
- Carey Wilkerson, formerly of The H & R Block Foundation and the Marion and Henry Bloch Charitable Foundation