



United Way  
of Central Carolinas

FOUNDATION FOR  
THE CAROLINAS



# COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND R E P O R T

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's  
response to the pandemic



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## Joint Letter from Our CEOs and Committee Co-Chairs

In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 hit communities across the nation, impacting every aspect of daily life. As stay-at-home orders were issued and schools and businesses temporarily closed, our community experienced the tension and strain of an unpredictable and volatile environment. Daily reports of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths increased, and the virus began to illuminate longstanding health and economic disparities among people of color and those in underserved communities.

At the height of the pandemic, grocery store shelves were empty, and charitable food organizations were overwhelmed. Schools were quickly shifting to virtual classrooms, and many families did not have internet access or child care. Essential workers had no way to social-distance and yet had to continue working. Many feared getting sick, and those without health insurance also worried about how they would pay for it.

It was time for the community to rally together and take action immediately. Recognizing the crisis at hand, corporate and community leaders quickly came together to mitigate the effects of the global pandemic. On March 16, 2020, United Way of Central Carolinas and Foundation For The Carolinas launched the Charlotte-Mecklenburg COVID-19 Response Fund. The generous commitments from the first five contributors—LendingTree, the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Truist and the Howard R. Levine Foundation—inspired additional donations from the public and private philanthropic community, as well as individual donations of all sizes. Altogether the fund raised nearly \$24 million.

We established a board of investors to provide strategic direction and oversight and a grants committee comprised of 19 local leaders to review proposals and make grant decisions. With their guidance and insight, United Way of Central Carolinas and Foundation For The Carolinas created a grants program to administer funds to organizations on the frontlines. Through eight rounds of grantmaking, 412 grants were awarded to 237 local nonprofits. We prioritized support for basic needs, healthcare and mental health, youth initiatives, employment and workforce development, and the arts. While the impact was significant, without the COVID-19 Response Fund the pandemic's effects could have been even more devastating.

Now, as the world battles omicron and other variants, a look back at where we have been is instructive. **Most of all**, we take this opportunity to say thanks to all our funders, supporters and partners to whom we are immensely grateful for your willingness to uplift, empower and protect our community.

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Co-Chair  
Board of Investors

### Charles Bowman

Co-Chair  
Board of Investors

### Laura Yates Clark

President and CEO  
United Way of Central Carolinas

### Michael Marsicano

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### Edwin Peacock

Co-Chair  
Grants Committee

### Tanya Blackmon

Co-Chair  
Grants Committee

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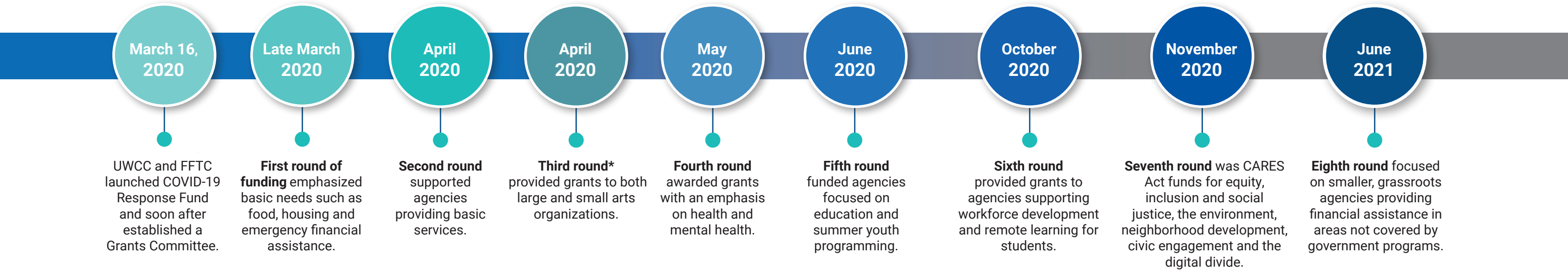
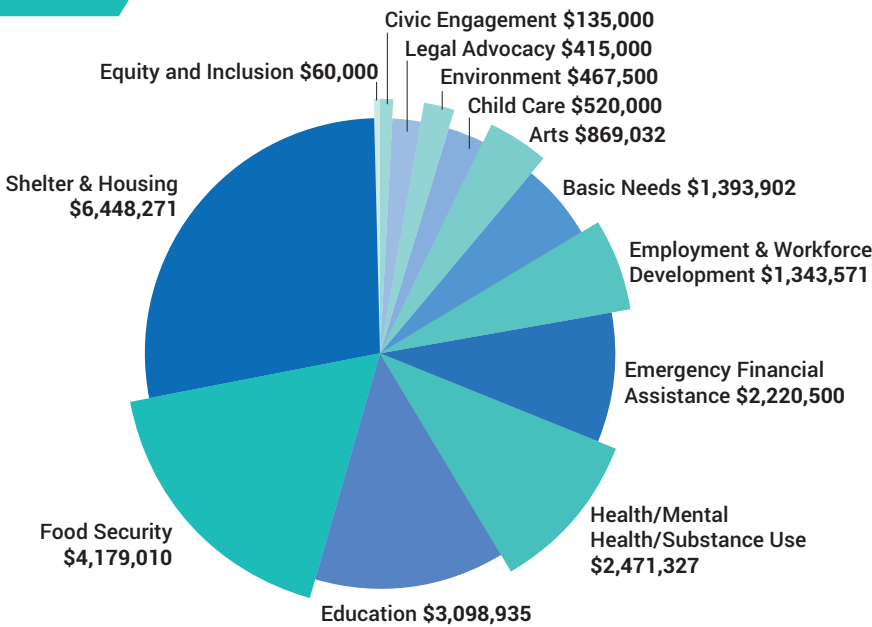
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**Lisa Saunders**  
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# OUR RESPONSE

The COVID-19 Response Fund represents the partnership efforts of United Way of Central Carolinas, Foundation For The Carolinas, Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte, corporations, houses of faith and others. The goal of the fund was to help individuals and families in Mecklenburg County who were impacted by the pandemic, with emphasis on providing for the basic human needs of our community's most vulnerable residents.

Nearly \$24 million was distributed for pandemic relief in Mecklenburg County.



## The Process

8 Grant Rounds

A Board of Investors and a Grants Committee were set up to award grants and establish the Response Fund's parameters. These groups included a cross-section of corporate, government/civic, and nonprofit leaders.

The Fund leveraged federal CARES Act funding in addition to private donations.

412 Grants Awarded

Needs were assessed on a rolling basis through data analysis and conversations with front-line service providers and community leaders.

A mix of large, medium and smaller grants were awarded, with a special focus on grassroots organizations.

## Extending Our Reach Beyond Mecklenburg County

In neighboring counties, pandemic-related funds managed by Foundation For The Carolinas and/or United Way of Central Carolinas provided additional relief to local nonprofit organizations. In total, 177 grants totaling more than \$1.6 million were distributed in Iredell, Cabarrus, Union, Anson and York counties to support needs ranging from food, shelter and medical assistance to education and transportation services.

\*The arts funding was administered separately from the Response Fund.

BASIC NEEDS

The immediate burden of pandemic-specific challenges was inconvenient for some, but devastating for others. The pandemic caused an increase in the number of households requiring assistance with basic needs. With that in mind, the COVID-19 Response Fund focused the initial investments on ensuring families had food on the table, a safe place to sleep and live, and help paying expenses such as rent and utilities. Funds were distributed to a variety of organizations ranging in size and scope. The goal was to strike a balance between organizations with a broad reach and grassroots organizations that could quickly connect to people from marginalized communities.

“We knew many in our community were struggling, only to be pushed almost to a breaking point because of this virus. We also saw that nonprofit organizations were working night and day to address the high demand. I don’t know what would have happened if our community had not stepped up, but I’m so thankful we did.”

- Jill Olmstead, Chief Human Resources Officer, LendingTree

Food

From well-known organizations such as **Second Harvest Food Bank**, which provided food to pantries and led community food distribution efforts, to smaller neighborhood-based organizations such as **For the Struggle**, which focused on providing fresh produce and other safety-net services to African American seniors in the Beatties Ford Road corridor, investments in food security were significant and far-reaching. The Response Fund supported the distribution of over **2 million pounds of food** and more than **4.5 million meals** to more than **250,000 households**. Response funds also helped many brick-and-mortar establishments pivot to mobile delivery or drive-through services to make food distribution safer for both clients and staff.

“When we saw the level of need, it was important that we collectively accepted the call to provide food and other basic needs to families during such a critical time.”

- Dena Diorio, County Manager, Mecklenburg County

Shelter

COVID-19 brought many unique challenges related to housing to an already stressed system. As shelters experienced an influx of new individuals and families to serve, new restrictions limited their capacity by one-third. Quarantining became an ongoing need, and shelters implemented new processes in response.

Grants provided through the Response Fund ensured that organizations such as **Carolinas CARE Partnership** could secure hotel rooms and purchase hygiene supplies for those in need. Response funds were also used to help provide early access to the vaccine for vulnerable populations by providing transportation support. The funds helped shelter **nearly 2,200 people** in hotels and helped move **565 people** from shelters into permanent housing.

Emergency Financial Assistance

The COVID-19 Response Fund was a vital resource for rent, utilities and medical expenses. Grants were distributed to a variety of organizations serving diverse populations in our community. Nonprofit organizations such as **Comunidad Colectiva** received funding to provide support to Latinx individuals without access to federal benefits. **Charlotte Pride, Inc.** utilized support to ensure members of the LGBTQ+ community received emergency financial relief. The investment in basic needs helped nearly **6,300 households** with rent, mortgages and utilities, and more than **19,000 households** with other financial support.

Total Funding Awarded: \$14,656,683

Academy of Goal Achievers	\$20,000	InReach	\$15,000
Ada Jenkins Families and Careers Development Center	\$230,000	International House of Metrolina, Inc.	\$35,000
Angels and Sparrows Soup Kitchen, Inc.	\$82,000	Johnson C. Smith University	\$100,000
Bags of Hope	\$42,500	Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance	\$150,000
Beds for Kids	\$75,000	Learning Help Centers Of Charlotte	\$35,000
Block Love Charlotte	\$40,000	Legal Aid of North Carolina	\$25,000
Camino Community Center	\$75,000	Liberian Community Association of Greater Charlotte	\$35,000
Carolinas CARE Partnership	\$158,500	LIFESPAN, Inc.	\$5,000
Caterpillar Ministries	\$45,500	Little Rock CDC/U2U	\$30,000
Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte	\$150,000	Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays	\$582,360
Changed Choices	\$125,000	Lotus Campaign	\$30,000
Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy	\$250,000	Matthews HELP Center	\$40,000
Charlotte Family Housing	\$250,000	National Church Residences of Charlotte, NC, Inc.	\$5,000
Charlotte Mecklenburg Housing Partnership	\$5,022	ourBRIDGE for KIDS	\$220,000
Charlotte Pride, Inc.	\$25,000	Pineville Neighbors Place	\$40,000
Charlotte Rescue Mission	\$210,000	Project BOLT	\$40,000
Charlotte Village Network	\$10,902	Promise Youth Development	\$25,000
Coalición Latinoamericana	\$450,000	RAIN, Inc.	\$300,000
Common Wealth Charlotte	\$575,000	Rebuilding Together of Greater Charlotte	\$20,000
Communities in Schools	\$75,000	Reeder Memorial Missions Place	\$55,400
Community Link Programs Of Traveler Aid Society Of Central Carolinas, Inc.	\$30,000	Refugee Support Services of the Carolinas, Inc.	\$50,000
Comunidad Colectiva	\$100,000	Renaissance West Community Initiative	\$435,000
Council for Children's Rights	\$355,000	Rockwell A.M.E. Zion Church	\$130,000
Crisis Assistance Ministry	\$256,688	Roof Above	\$796,321
CrossRoads Corporation for Affordable Housing and Community Development, Inc.	\$63,000	Safe Alliance	\$342,500
Davidson Housing Coalition	\$15,000	Samaritan House, Inc.	\$39,000
Dilworth Soup Kitchen	\$12,000	Sandra and Leon Levine Jewish Community Center	\$250,000
DreamKey Partners	\$200,000	Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina	\$1,975,000
Factor of Seven, Inc.	\$33,000	Servants Heart of Mint Hill	\$25,000
Families Forward	\$15,000	Shepherds Center of Charlotte	\$15,000
First Legacy Church, Inc.	\$15,000	SocialServe	\$1,207,290
First United Methodist Church	\$8,500	South Tryon Community Development Corporation dba Brookhill Community Resource Center	\$50,000
Florence Crittenton	\$275,000	St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church, Inc.	\$25,000
For the Struggle, Inc.	\$75,000	Supportive Housing Communities	\$240,000
Freedom Fighting Missionaries, Inc.	\$20,000	The Abandon Project	\$30,000
Friendship Community Development Corporation	\$220,000	The Bulb	\$102,500
Furnish for Good	\$10,000	The Center for Community Transitions	\$227,500
Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte	\$37,750	The Hope House Foundation	\$110,000
Gracious Hands Transitional Housing	\$10,000	The QC Family Tree, Inc.	\$30,000
Greater Matthews Habitat for Humanity	\$37,500	The Relatives, Inc.	\$114,500
Habit Missions Ministry, Inc. dba Watchmen of the Streets	\$10,000	The Salvation Army	\$738,448
Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region	\$280,000	The Save Our Children Movement, Inc.	\$55,000
Heal Charlotte	\$40,000	UMAR Services, Inc.	\$75,000
Hearts Beat As One Foundation	\$25,000	United Way of Central Carolinas (Unite Charlotte)	\$150,000
Historic West End Partners, Inc.	\$75,000	Universal Institute for Successful Aging	\$25,000
Hope Haven, Inc.	\$135,000	University City Foundation	\$70,000
Hope Street Food Pantry, Inc.	\$18,000	Vietnamese Association of Charlotte	\$5,000
Hope Vibes, Inc.	\$50,000	World Central Kitchen, Inc.	\$125,000
Humane Society of Charlotte	\$20,000	Young Women's Christian Association of the Central Carolinas, Inc.	\$75,000
		Youth Villages	\$20,000

Results



Food

251,128 households served  
2,174,363 pounds of food distributed  
4,538,917 meals served



Financial

6,298 households received rent/mortgage or utility assistance  
4,217 households received loan assistance  
19,350 households received other financial assistance  
8,783 households received financial counseling



Housing/Shelter

3,166 individuals sheltered in facilities  
2,199 individuals sheltered in hotels  
565 individuals were provided assistance to move from shelter to housing

# BASIC NEEDS

Grantee Highlights



Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays

At Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays, staff members, volunteers and donors share the common belief that food is a basic human right. Loaves & Fishes, which merged with Friendship Trays in May 2021, fights hunger in Mecklenburg County by providing a week’s supply of nutritious groceries through a network of emergency food pantries, as well as healthy prepared meals to those struggling with food insecurity.

### The Need for Food Assistance Tripled

At the height of the pandemic, the number of people in need of food assistance tripled. Job loss, reductions in pay, furloughs and illness due to COVID caused many to have to choose between paying their bills or feeding their families. Funding from the COVID-19 Response Fund enabled Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays to pivot from providing groceries through a network of over 40 brick-and-mortar food pantries to drive-through mobile food distribution, allowing the organization to safely feed more people.

“Without this funding, it would have been nearly impossible to feed such an explosion in numbers.”

- Tina Postel, CEO, Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays

### Funding Filled the Gap

Before the pandemic, Loaves & Fishes relied on hundreds of community food drives to help restock its pantries. The new COVID-19 precautions and restrictions abruptly halted food drives due to safety concerns. The Response funding was critical to filling the gap, allowing the organization to instead purchase nonperishable foods to meet the increased demand.

The funding also enabled Loaves & Fishes to hire a social worker to connect clients to additional resources, many of whom had never had to seek help before. And, as the number of Spanish-speaking families in need of services increased, the organization hired two part-time bilingual receptionists. To meet the needs of its most vulnerable clients, Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays began a home-delivery program for people with health and transportation issues, and a specialty-box program to provide access to health-appropriate food for people with chronic diseases.

120,000 people fed



Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance

Jamall Kinard, Executive Director of Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance (LNA), believes in “building a transformational ecosystem that produces a diverse community with strong families.” LNA focuses on four areas—family stability, civic awareness, prevention of displacement and economic mobility. The organization is working to build a community outreach center in partnership with Faith Memorial Baptist Church, acquire vacant properties to create more affordable housing (duplexes and quadplexes), and develop an Economic Mobility Hub utilizing a vacant, neighborhood school.

### The Response Funds Helped Our Neighbors Most in Need

LNA estimated that during the pandemic, 47.9% of residents enrolled in its program made less than \$10,000 per year, 54.6% did not have an active bank account, and 56% experienced job loss or a decrease in income. As their families were struggling to access basic necessities—food, medicine, personal hygiene products, PPE, transportation and internet access—LNA knew additional financial support would be critical to helping residents through these difficult times.

### Financial Relief and Safety

The grants committee awarded four grants to LNA, which provided financial relief to 194 families through gift cards distributed weekly or biweekly to meet basic needs such as food, shelter and transportation. With a focus on empowerment, gift cards provided community members with the agency to address their needs. The gift cards had an added benefit: the financial support promoted a sense of safety, as 94% of residents surveyed said the support helped decrease neighborhood crime.

“If we didn’t come together during this time, it would be like me saying, ‘You have a hole on your side of the boat,’ while we are traveling in the same boat! We are both going down if we don’t work together to fix the hole.”

- Jamall Kinard, Executive Director, Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance

### Community Building and Mental Health

As a result of the funding, LNA witnessed an increase in overall resident engagement, which helped combat feelings of isolation and hopelessness. To that end, 91% of residents surveyed reported the regular financial assistance positively impacted their mental and emotional health.

194 families served

HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH

Physical Health

COVID-19 further highlighted health disparities and differences in outcomes among African American and Latinx populations, as well as seniors and the immune-compromised. To address this, funds were provided to a variety of healthcare organizations, including the **C.W. Williams Community Health Center** and **Charlotte Community Health Clinic**. The focus was to provide continued access to quality healthcare and targeted outreach to communities in need. Funding helped provide free and reduced-cost healthcare to more than **41,000 individuals** and facilitated nearly **55,000 patient visits**.

“Charlotte is blessed with a strong community of healthcare providers, all focused on providing access to excellent care. The pandemic continues to be an 'all-hands-on-deck' experience for everyone in this work, and supporting the physical health of those in need has never been more important than it is now. I'm glad to be a part of investing in the health and wellness of our community.”

- Brian Middleton, Vice President, Atrium Health

Mental Health

Loss of loved ones, isolation, job insecurity, online education, financial stress and racially traumatic events impacted the mental health of so many people. Many of us thought the pandemic would last only a few months and everything would soon return to normal, only to learn that shutdowns, quarantines and social distancing would become the norm. The COVID-19 Response Fund Grants Committee

recognized the psychological impact and directed dollars to organizations focused on wellness, resiliency and socio-emotional support.

Group youth counseling hosted by **Mental Health America** and telehealth sessions with licensed clinical therapists at the **Smith Family Wellness Center** are just two examples of programs funded by the Response Fund. Grants went to **35 local clinics** and nonprofit mental health organizations that provided critical care. Response funds provided access to free and reduced-cost mental healthcare for nearly **30,000 individuals**, who received more than **41,153 counseling sessions** from organizations serving diverse populations.

“We are in a mental health crisis. It was critical to support our grassroots mental health organizations who know their communities best. These organizations were able to reach people who are often left out of the mainstream systems and respond best to help from inside their communities.”

- Mark Jerrell, Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners



Total Funding Awarded: \$2,471,327

Agape Dental Ministry	\$15,600	McLeod Addictive Disease Center, Inc.	\$55,000
Alexander Youth Network	\$15,000	MedAssist of Mecklenburg	\$200,000
Anuvia	\$56,000	Mental Health America	\$39,324
Bridge To Recovery, Inc.	\$35,000	Mental Health America of Central Carolinas, Inc.	\$8,398
Care Ring	\$273,750	Nevins, Inc.	\$25,000
Center for Prevention Services	\$20,000	Pat's Place Child Advocacy Center	\$230,000
Charlotte Center City Partners	\$200,000	Piedmont Health Services and Sickie Cell Agency	\$15,000
Charlotte Community Health Clinic, Inc.	\$50,000	Promise Resource Network, Inc.	\$50,000
Charlotte Transgender Healthcare Group	\$10,000	Ronald McDonald House of Charlotte, Inc.	\$15,000
EmpowHERment, Inc.	\$22,500	Shelter Health Services	\$38,135
ForCharlotte	\$25,000	Steve Smith Family Foundation	\$140,000
Foster Village Charlotte	\$49,620	Teen Health Connection, Inc.	\$57,500
HeartBright Foundation, Inc.	\$117,000	The American Heart Association	\$15,000
HopeWay Foundation	\$25,000	The C. W. Williams Community Health Center, Inc.	\$100,000
Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte	\$26,000	Time Out Youth	\$230,000
Lake Norman Community Health Clinic	\$77,500	West Boulevard Neighborhood Coalition	\$35,000
Make-A-Wish Central & Western North Carolina	\$100,000	Wilson Oasis	\$70,000
Matthews Free Medical Clinic	\$30,000		



Results



41,225 individuals received free/ reduced cost healthcare

29,812 individuals received free/ reduced cost mental healthcare

54,468 patient visits

41,153 counseling sessions



Care Ring

Care Ring is a nonprofit healthcare organization that envisions a community that promotes, protects and improves the health and well-being of all people. Driven by the motto “The Heart of Community Health,” Care Ring is a trusted pillar of community-based health services dedicated to serving the uninsured, under-insured or those lacking access to affordable, high-quality preventive healthcare.

Care Ring offers direct, primary and preventive care through its clinic, and it partners with providers across Charlotte to ensure access to a wide array of specialties, hospital-based care and diagnostic services through physician volunteers.

Health Disparities and Healthcare Access

When the pandemic hit, Care Ring’s patient population faced increased challenges. Providers quickly noticed a disproportionate rate of positive COVID-19 cases among patients of color, and many faced higher risk of complications due to underlying health conditions. To make matters worse, lost wages left more individuals unable to afford care. Care Ring also identified an increased need for mental health services, as nearly 75% of patients reported anxiety due to challenges such as lost jobs or wages, food insecurity, or the threat of losing their homes.

3,000 people served

Access to Quality Healthcare at No Cost

The COVID-19 Response Fund enabled Care Ring to waive all client fees without disrupting its capacity for service. The funding helped Care Ring serve over 3,000 patients, a majority of whom were people of color with an average annual income of \$19,000. During a time when losing access to healthcare would have been catastrophic, Response funds helped ensure patients of all backgrounds received quality healthcare and support for mental health needs.

Funding also helped support program adaptation as the organization made shifts in program delivery to ensure all services continued in the rapidly changing environment. The Low-Cost Clinic immediately began utilizing telehealth visits to serve patients. Through the physician volunteer program, Physicians Reach Out, the clinic connected patients with urgent specialty needs to the appropriate provider. And, as the demand for Spanish-speaking support increased, Care Ring utilized funding to provide interpreters.

“Without this additional funding to waive fees, clients would have foregone care in order to put food on the table, and we would have been operating on a reduced-income model. We are tremendously grateful to the community for their generosity and to the committee for its work to quickly and diligently get funding where and when it was needed most.”

- Tchernavia Montgomery, Executive Director, Care Ring



Wilson Oasis

Wilson Oasis provides enriched programs and training to help foster and maintain positive mental health. As a mental health advocate who has experienced personal trauma, founder Aura Davis focuses on creating awareness and supporting communities, families and individuals, with a focus on African American men. Wilson Oasis increases access to mental healthcare through partnerships with local therapists and removes barriers by providing scholarships. By promoting the importance and value of mental health support, the organization serves many who would not otherwise seek or obtain help.

The Pandemic's Impact on Mental Health

During the pandemic, Davis noticed an uptick in individuals seeking mental health services and expressing a need for support. Feelings of anxiety, isolation, and financial distress were compounded by experiences of racialized trauma from the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and others. Davis believes the pandemic forced people to see the importance of mental health and made them more open to seeking mental health services. “People began to understand that learning to process trauma, depression, anger and other toxic emotions is the best way to show up in other areas of your life, for yourself and for those you love,” Davis said.

3X more scholarships awarded

How Funding Helped Heal

With COVID-19 funding, Wilson Oasis was able to triple the number of scholarships it provided, allowing direct access to counseling services for more individuals at a time of great need. Additionally, the organization was able to continue hosting mental-health support groups, and funds enabled Wilson Oasis to partner with other nonprofits to serve a larger audience.

“The funding provided an introduction to counseling for many people who otherwise would have never asked for this kind of support. It was so impactful to see the number of people we have been able to serve, and to see individuals go through counseling and finish feeling more confident and inspired to maintain their mental health! People are more aware than ever of the importance of mental health and now have the tools to recognize and address their needs.”

- Aura Davis, Founder/Executive Director, Wilson Oasis

YOUTH INITIATIVES

“The pandemic was especially challenging for kids. The funds provided tools to help students continue their learning and provide a sense of stability, which we know is so important to our youth.”

- Heath Campbell, Truist Metrolina Regional President

An important goal of the Response Fund included providing necessary assistance to support academic success. Many children did not have the appropriate tools for remote classrooms, and shifts to virtual learning impacted access to daily school services. After-school programs and other activities that provide engagement were in a constant state of adaptation. Important supports such as free meals and social-worker case management were at risk, as organizations and schools closed indefinitely. And with limited quiet space and/or the responsibilities of caring for siblings, many children faced the challenge of their own home environment becoming a barrier to academic success.



Grants Provided for Academic, Socio-Emotional and Basic Needs

To help mitigate the impact of these issues, the COVID-19 Response Fund offered grants to **54 youth-serving organizations** in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Funding focused on educational programs, child care, and youth activities and outreach. Trusted organizations provided academic and digital resources to students; food, transportation and financial relief to households; and tutor training, child care and scholarship funding to families. Mental health and socio-emotional assistance were also prioritized to ensure that children and families received holistic aid.

“Children are among the most vulnerable in our community. We know that to help a child, we also have to provide wraparound support for the entire family.”

- Federico Rios, Assistant Director, Office of Equity, Mobility and Immigrant Integration, City of Charlotte

The Response funds helped facilitate academic and household stability. Funding was distributed to **Project 658** and **Freedom Communities**, which provided virtual learning support in a safe space with adult guidance and supervision. This helped ensure parents could continue to work and remain financially stable.

From children in foster care, to youth experiencing homelessness, to first-generation college students, to children with autism, the grants helped ensure that **all** children and youth in our community received ongoing service and vital support. More than **3,000 students** received academic support and nearly **90,000 children, youth and families** were served.

Total Funding Awarded: \$3,618,935

Above and Beyond Students, Inc.	\$80,000	Latin Americans Working for Achievement	\$10,000
Augustine Literacy Project - Charlotte	\$60,000	Luminaria Learning Solutions	\$15,000
Autism Charlotte	\$205,000	MeckEd	\$30,000
Autism Society of North Carolina	\$25,000	North Mecklenburg Child	\$20,000
B.E.A.M. Foundation	\$15,000	Northside Baptist Church	\$25,000
Bethlehem Center of Charlotte, Inc.	\$25,000	ParentChild+	\$85,000
Brookstone Schools of Mecklenburg County	\$20,000	Philips Academy of North Carolina	\$11,535
Carolina Youth Coalition	\$35,000	Prodigal Son Foundation	\$20,000
Carolinas Aviation Museum	\$46,000	Profound Gentlemen	\$5,000
Charlotte Bilingual Preschool	\$50,000	Project 658	\$110,000
Charlotte Speech and Hearing Center, Inc.	\$195,000	Project One Scholarship Fund, Inc.	\$10,000
Child Care Resources, Inc.	\$520,000	Project Scientist	\$20,000
Classroom Central, Inc.	\$25,000	Promising Pages, Inc.	\$42,500
Cops & Barbers	\$45,000	R. Bruce Irons Camp Fund	\$10,000
Digi-Bridge	\$37,500	Read Charlotte	\$150,000
Discovery Place	\$192,000	Restorative Justice CLT	\$15,000
E2D, Inc.	\$95,000	S.T.A.R.S. Math & English Academy	\$15,000
First Baptist Church - West Community Services Association	\$40,000	Sports Biz Cares	\$15,000
Freedom Communities	\$25,000	St. Andrews United Methodist Church	\$10,000
Freedom School Partners	\$60,000	Stiletto Boss University	\$20,000
GARDHOUSE LIMITED	\$10,000	The Learning Collaborative	\$65,000
Gen-One, Inc.	\$5,700	Thrive Global Project	\$47,500
Girl Scouts, Hornets' Nest Council	\$11,000	UMBA Bright Stars, Inc.	\$30,000
Greater Enrichment Program	\$5,200	United Negro College Fund	\$75,000
Heart Math Tutoring, Inc.	\$20,000	Urban Promise Charlotte	\$95,000
Junior Achievement of Central Carolinas	\$20,000	YMCA	\$750,000
La Escuelita San Marcos	\$25,000	Young Black Leadership Alliance	\$25,000

Results



- 89,801 individuals served
- 981 households received academic support
- 3,149 students received academic support
- 346 tutors trained
- 330 child care programs served
- 1,512 students received financial support/scholarships



# YOUTH INITIATIVES

Grantee Highlights



Freedom School Partners

A study published by McKinsey & Company during the pandemic warned that our country's most vulnerable children may have lost up to one year of academic gains. The impacts of this loss have exacerbated the achievement gap by 15% to 20% and increased dropout rates by 5% to 7%.

As a result, Freedom School Partners (FSP) knew it needed to quickly pivot to minimize the negative effects of the pandemic on the academic progress of its scholars. FSP aims to inspire a passion for reading and a love of learning in its youth scholars, goals that became even more urgent during the pandemic.

"FSP was founded on the belief that all children deserve access to high-quality learning and enrichment experiences," said CEO Glenda Bernhardt. Freedom School Partners offers a six-week summer literacy and enrichment program that keeps scholars engaged in and excited about learning, while staying safe, nurtured and well-fed. FSP scholars also have the opportunity to interact with caring, young adult role models who look like them.

## The Funds Helped Scholars Stay Engaged

FSP was unable to operate its summer program in person, so it developed the FSP 2020 R.E.S.P.O.N.S.E. (Reading and Enrichment for Scholars Plus Other Needed Supplies and Essentials) Program, which was held at pop-up sites around the city. This distribution program provided much needed educational and basic resources directly to scholars and families. It included participation stations with engaging activities in reading, math, enrichment and virtual support. These resources enabled children and families to reconnect to learning activities, and ensured they had the supplies and tools to lessen their burden and begin to reverse the achievement gap.

**"We would not have had the resources to serve as many scholars or offer the scale of services without this funding. This ultimately led to a significant impact on our scholars and community."**

**- Glenda Bernhardt, CEO, Freedom School Partners**



ourBRIDGE for KIDS

ourBRIDGE for KIDS provides academic and socio-emotional development to refugee and immigrant children and their families. With a focus on providing holistic support, its programs and initiatives include English tutoring and referrals to health, financial and housing resources. "Since the very beginning, our organization has focused on celebrating cultures, and promoting pride and awareness," said Sil Ganzó, founder of ourBRIDGE. "I love that we support families as they adjust to a new life in the United States, making this community and this country a better place for everyone."

**140,000 meals delivered to immigrant and refugee families**

In response to the pandemic, ourBRIDGE leaders surveyed 110 households in its afterschool program and learned that 80% of families had lost at least one source of income. Parents of children and youth who were home all day due to the shift to remote learning stated that consistent access to healthy meals was a major concern.

**80% of households served had lost at least one source of income by May 2020**

## The Funds Provided Academic and Socio-Emotional Support

For the remainder of the 2019-20 school year, ourBRIDGE for KIDS offered virtual tutoring and STEAM activities. The organization delivered school and activity supplies, hired staff to start a virtual school, and supported socio-emotional health through drive-by celebrations for end-of-year promotions.



**"If we had not received funding from the COVID-19 Response Fund, we would have not been able to deliver effectively as many resources so quickly."**

**- Sil Ganzó, Founder and Executive Director, ourBRIDGE for KIDS**

# EMPLOYMENT & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

“Lack or loss of employment has effects that are not just financial but psychological, emotional and sometimes physical. The dignity of being able to earn a livable wage is of great value, and the impact of COVID began to take that away from many individuals in our community. As a committee, we had to find ways to help maintain, restore or improve employment because of its overarching impact.”

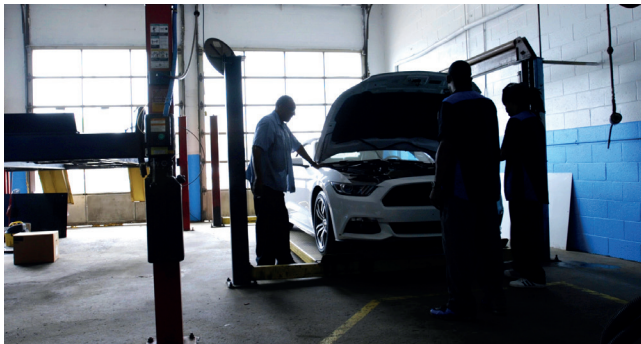
- Charles Bowman, President of North Carolina, Bank of America

Supporting workforce development was a critical need, as many lost their jobs or had to shift employment to care for children at home. Grants were awarded to **16 area employment and workforce development organizations** to help individuals obtain or maintain financial stability and employment and thus help stabilize the community's workforce.

### Support for Essential Workers and Entrepreneurs

Grants were initially focused on support for essential workers experiencing a loss of income due to layoffs or a reduction in hours, as well as investment in entrepreneurs struggling from the loss of revenue. Organizations such as **Commonwealth Charlotte** provided no-interest loans and deferred payment schedules to restaurant and hospitality workers, while **ASPIRE Community Capital** created a micro-loan fund to help sustain entrepreneurs.

Grants were also awarded to organizations that provide job training, career coaching, resume writing, and technology tools for job seekers.



### Funding Supported Employment Connections and New Skill Development

The pandemic illuminated the need for more employment connections in an environment in which in-person contact was limited. In response, grantees hosted monthly virtual job fairs to connect available job seekers with employers who were ready to hire, while others focused on soft skill development, or the development of new skills, to help maximize opportunities.

Funds supported organizations like **She Built This City**, which provided materials, software, and program scholarships for women to learn skilled trades, offering them new options for income and economic mobility. More than **700 adults and youth** received workforce development training, and more than **14,000 individuals** were served through the COVID-19 Response Fund.

“A strong workforce is the foundation of a thriving community. This investment was important to not only help sustain our economy, but also the well-being of our community.”

- Betsy Conway, Director, Community Relations, Lowe's Companies, Inc.

## Total Funding Awarded: \$1,343,571

Apparo	\$186,391	Mecklenburg Council of Elders	\$25,000
ASPIRE Community Capital	\$30,000	North Carolina Institute for Minority Economic Development	\$75,000
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation	\$21,900	North End Community Coalition	\$55,480
City Startup Labs, Inc.	\$50,000	Prospera North Carolina, LLC	\$75,000
Community Culinary School of Charlotte	\$60,000	She Built This City	\$105,000
Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont	\$237,300	Southside Rides Foundation	\$107,500
Grace Mar	\$25,000	The ROC Charlotte, LLC	\$55,000
Grameen America, Inc.	\$35,000	Urban League of Central Carolinas, Inc.	\$200,000



## Results



14,321 individuals served

711 individuals received workforce development support



# EMPLOYMENT & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Grantee Highlights



Urban League of Central Carolinas

The Urban League of Central Carolinas' (ULCC) mission is to advocate for and equip African Americans and all underserved communities with the tools to achieve social and economic equality. With a focus on financial stability and workforce development, ULCC offers nationally certified training in construction, HVAC and medical coding. It also hosts programs for nonclinical healthcare jobs and information technology.

When the stay-at-home orders were enacted, ULCC knew it had to find a way to continue to help individuals obtain employment and stay afloat financially in the midst of the pandemic and racially traumatic events.

"Our community is experiencing a triple pandemic—a health pandemic, an economic pandemic, and a period of racial unrest," said President and CEO Teddy McDaniel.

## Funds Addressed Evolving Needs

When the COVID-19 Response Fund first launched, ULCC reported that clients were in need of resources to maintain housing, as well as financial coaching and job training. As the pandemic progressed, ULCC recognized the need for increased access to employment opportunities as in-person efforts were no longer an option. To assist with these employment and hiring needs, ULCC used funding to adapt its on-site efforts and began hosting monthly job fairs virtually to connect candidates with companies like Atrium Health, Lowe's, RJ Leeper Construction, UPS and Walmart. The Response funding also allowed the Urban League to provide resources to sustain employment, health and safety by supplying PPE to essential workers.

**103 students served in the Remote Academy**

## Support for Virtual Learning

To support virtual learning for adults, ULCC purchased laptops and internet hot spots and invested in a "skill mill" where participants could receive training in which they felt like they were in a real lab.

For youth, ULCC set up a remote academy for 103 students who struggled due to a lack of Wi-Fi, and provided bus transportation to and from learning locations to ensure continuity.

**"We greatly appreciate the support of the COVID-19 Response Fund. The pandemic is still going on, and we have to keep collaborating as a community to bridge the gaps moving forward."**

**- Teddy McDaniel, President and CEO, Urban League of Central Carolinas**



Goodwill Industries

Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont offers workforce development services through its vision that "all people in our region have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential through family-sustaining employment."

Goodwill helps individuals from varying backgrounds obtain relevant skills and gainful employment through career coaching and free job training. Assistance with basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter are key components of the organization's strategy to work with partners to provide clients with holistic support.

"I love the impact that Goodwill has on individuals and families in our community," Fund Development Director Julie Drinkhahn said. "People don't come to Goodwill just to find a job. When they walk through our doors—physical or virtual—they are offered programs and services that are designed to identify and build upon skills, interests and opportunities that support them on their journey to stability and fulfillment."

## COVID-19's Impact on Operations

Because Goodwill relies heavily on retail operations to fund its mission, the impact of the shutdown was significant. In March 2020, Goodwill closed its 26 retail stores and all donation centers. The impact had both external and internal effects, as retail workers were temporarily laid off, in-person services were reduced, and revenue plummeted.

**Provided 1,444 people with career services and basic-needs support in a 2-week period**

## Funding Helped Goodwill Resume Services for Those in Need

Rising to the challenge, Goodwill transitioned its in-person services to virtual platforms, thereby continuing to support clients and facilitate employment in the midst of a challenging time. COVID-19 Response funds were used to provide virtual services to the community at no cost. As a result, Goodwill was able to provide job training, basic needs and job-seeker support, career coaching, resume prep, and career assessments. In a two-week period, Goodwill served 1,444 individuals in our community.

**"The COVID-19 Response Fund allowed us to have the necessary resources to continue to serve those who needed us most, during a time when revenue streams were greatly impacted."**

**- Chris Jackson, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont**



THE ARTS

“Art is essential because it can inspire people to make positive change in communities, share histories, foster empathy and become engaged in our democracy. It is a platform that connects people to place and to each other, which is vital during these challenging times.”

- Charles Thomas, Director/Charlotte, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

The impact of stay-at-home orders took a huge toll on the arts community, which relied on in-person events as a primary source of revenue. Individual artists, grassroots groups, and larger arts organizations experienced a reduction in attendance and lost revenue.

As performances and shows were canceled, arts organizations were challenged with developing new virtual or socially distanced programming. During a time in which the arts workforce was significantly

impacted, the COVID-19 Response Fund supported not only virtual shows and programming, but also operations and jobs, ensuring the arts community would not be permanently damaged.

The COVID-19 Response Fund selected **20 organizations** for grants to help with a range of expenses, including operating costs, digital production, materials, and personal protective equipment. Organizations such as the **Charlotte Art League** and the **ASC Mecklenburg Creatives Resiliency Fund** received grants to support local artists and performers who were financially impacted by the loss of income. Organizations like the **Children’s Theatre of Charlotte** and **Arts+** received support to help transition programs and children’s performances to online platforms.

Thousands have benefited from the distribution of funds to our local arts organizations during the pandemic—not only artists and the organizations who support them, but also the broader Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. The arts play an important role in our society that goes well beyond enjoyment. The arts are a part of our local culture, history, storytelling and social movements, encouraging people at their lowest moments and, most importantly, inspiring future generations.



Photo courtesy of Melissa Key

Total Funding Awarded: \$869,032

ARTPOP	\$35,000	Goodyear Arts	\$28,500
Arts+	\$25,000	Harvey B. Gantt Center	\$50,000
ASC Mecklenburg Creatives Resiliency Fund	\$50,000	Hue House	\$30,300
Brand the Moth	\$35,000	JazzArts Charlotte	\$24,232
Caroline Calouche & Co.	\$25,000	McColl Center	\$30,000
Charlotte Art League	\$10,000	Mint Museum	\$15,000
Charlotte Ballet	\$185,000	Que-OS (BOOM)	\$43,000
Charlotte Center City Partners Community Trust	\$72,000	The Arts Empowerment Project	\$7,000
Charlotte Is Creative	\$25,000	Theatre Charlotte	\$19,000
Children’s Theatre of Charlotte	\$150,000	Tosco Music	\$10,000



# THE ARTS

Grantee Highlights



Harvey B. Gantt Center

The Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture preserves and celebrates excellence in the art, history and culture of African Americans and those of African descent. The Center’s mission is to “provide inspiration and encouragement, connect and build community, and to be the voice of justice.”

A fixture in the local and regional arts community since 1974, the Gantt Center provides a Black perspective on academic, emotional and cultural aspects of the community. President and CEO David Taylor and his team strive to make the Gantt Center an “authentic place to discuss cultural issues including equity.”

### A Rebirth in Innovation

Due to the stay-at-home order, like many arts organizations the Gantt Center had to pivot quickly to serve the community in a new way. The Events and Visitor Experience teams, along with support staff who work primarily on-site, all pitched in to reimagine their offerings and create an entirely new programmatic platform. The team researched topics, designed new programs, built a new narrative, and leveraged their networks to secure guest speakers.

70 virtual programs

### Funding Supported Operations and Maintaining a Full Staff

Thanks in part to the COVID-19 Response Fund grant, the Gantt team was able to retain all of its staff. The ability to keep its brain trust of seasoned staff to re- envision programming has completely changed the Gantt Center’s outlook and way of doing business for the long-term. Taylor believes the Center is now well- positioned to move into subscription-based content, enhanced and expanded virtual program offerings and a broader fundraising strategy.

### Virtual Programming is the Great Equalizer

The Gantt Center found virtual programming to be the “great equalizer.” People from all walks of life are now participating in the Unmasked series, Family First programming, new exhibit launches and racial-justice conversations via YouTube and other online platforms. Additionally, to support educational equity, the Center started the Gantt Teacher Institute with virtual training to help teachers build more equitable classrooms. People from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds from across the country joined the virtual programs.

“We are well-positioned to enhance our operational model and to embrace technology and innovation as an institution due to the COVID-19 Response funding.”

- David Taylor, President and CEO, Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture

### COVID-19 Response Funding Led to a Large Grant

Due to the COVID-19 Response Fund support and how it helped the organization reinvent itself, the Gantt Center received a \$1 million grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to continue building its virtual strategy and execute its vision.



Brand the Moth

Brand the Moth provides access to resources and supports platforms that create jobs for both emerging and professional artists. The organization works to make public art accessible—either free or at a low cost—for small businesses and others. The art produced by Brand the Moth and its artists often becomes a local landmark in Charlotte.

Public art has the power to showcase our history and uplift marginalized groups, as well as stimulate economic growth. “The arts are essential to building stronger communities by establishing healthy expression and cross-community dialogue while developing a unique culture, civic design and city landscape,” said Sam Guzzie, Partner and Director of Programming for Brand the Moth. “As Charlotte is rapidly growing, it is important now to support the arts in our community, as art crosses expected and unforeseen boundaries.”

### Creating Access and Opportunities for Local Artists

The COVID-19 pandemic was difficult for many artists as many rely on performances, showings and art events. Many artists also work in the hospitality industry and thus experienced a dual loss of income as a result of bar and restaurant closures. Without the ability to hold public events, artists experienced a significant financial impact, especially those with limited access to health insurance.

20+ local artists supported;  
6 public murals produced

The COVID-19 Response Fund grant enabled Brand the Moth to support over 20 local artists through the META Mural Residency, a 10-week program for local artists looking to expand into mural arts. The funds sustained artists through the pandemic as four of five residents have continued to create community murals, art events and workshops since completing their residency.

“Without the Response Fund grant, Brand the Moth would have been forced to cancel the 2020 mural residency, which provided stipends to over 20 local artists and created six murals in the city.”

- Sam Guzzie, Director of Programming and Partner, Brand the Moth





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## What's Next

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a great deal of suffering and disruption, and it is clear that it is far from over. In the midst of this crisis however, the COVID-19 Response Fund has served as a beacon of hope, illuminating our community's collective generosity and ability to come together to address our most pressing needs.

Inspired by the collective action of the COVID-19 Response Fund, our community should move forward with a focus on the lessons learned. As other community initiatives are employed, this report concludes with a focus on the future, and recommendations that can serve as a helpful guide.

### Community Recommendations and Lessons Learned

#### ► Continue to leverage the power of collective giving

When the community comes together, united in focus on a specific cause, the impact is far greater. As other collaborative efforts like the Infusion Arts Fund and Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative are implemented, we hope that the Fund's legacy of collaboration and partnership will help inspire future efforts.

#### ► Empower more grassroots organizations and lift up previously marginalized voices

The Fund supported many grassroots organizations, as it was clear that they are trusted resources for the communities they serve. We must continue to invest in smaller organizations who are making an impact, and strengthen historically marginalized communities by lifting up nontraditional leaders and providing space for their voices to be heard.

#### ► Invest in our nonprofit community's infrastructure

Many organizations had limited technology resources before the pandemic, and lacked a solid operational foundation for emergency preparedness. We should continue to invest in organizational infrastructure to help organizations, and our community, be better prepared.

#### ► Develop strategies to proactively address issues of inequity

As has been stated, the pandemic revealed the impact of racial inequity when compounded by a crisis. We must leverage the momentum of focused investment on this issue, and develop strategies to deal with root causes to improve outcomes now, and in the future.

#### ► Encourage innovation to serve community needs

Many organizations learned to be creative in serving client needs out of necessity. Response funding provided support to innovative practices that have set the tone for the future, and addressed needs that may have otherwise been overlooked. It is important that we invest and support innovation and give organizations the flexibility with funding to serve in a new and unique way.

**Thank you** to all of the corporate and individual donors who contributed to this effort, and all of the organizations who faithfully serve our community. Your investment and commitment helped make a difference in the lives of many at a crucial time, and set a foundation that will benefit individuals, children and families for years to come.



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