
HOW WE CARED FOR EACH OTHER

**CARE AND RADICAL IMAGINING
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

PREPARED BY:
GRAND VICTORIA FOUNDATION



CARE DURING A PANDEMIC

The onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic turned all of our worlds upside down. We lost friends, family members, and loved ones. The livelihoods of our neighbors and community members have been decimated, exacerbating already existing racial and economic inequities. The disproportionate health, economic, and educational impact of the pandemic on Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color has been devastating. These communities have also had to deal with ongoing systemic racial violence at the same time.

Community Care

In the midst of fear and struggle, there was also hope and care. Across Illinois and the country, individuals and organizations came together to provide for the most vulnerable members of our communities through establishing mutual aid networks, directly supporting their neighbors with food and personal protective equipment, and providing direct cash assistance to individuals and families who lost their jobs. In particular, the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors rose to the occasion to quickly and thoughtfully care for the communities we support and work alongside of. Grand Victoria Foundation is so proud to be a part of a philanthropic community that has come together so quickly to raise funds for nonprofits around the state to maintain their operations and staff, provide basic needs to struggling communities, and create and sustain the provision of direct financial assistance.

How Philanthropy Cared

The philanthropic community came together to provide millions of dollars to organizations, allowing them to 1.) stabilize and retain staff in a new and unsettling environment; 2.) meet the basic needs of communities most impacted by the pandemic; and 3.) build capacity to meet the increased need for services. The ripple effect to communities meant that lives were saved, people were able to remain in their homes, have food on the table, and protect themselves with personal protective equipment.

HOW GRAND VICTORIA FOUNDATION CARED FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund

Responding to and supporting communities most impacted by the pandemic for GVF included releasing our COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund grant opportunity to current grantees on April 17, 2020. GVF quickly developed and executed an emergency grants application, review, and recommendation process that incorporated all staff.

Within one month, we were able to provide \$378,750 in funding to 52 organizations across Illinois. Funds were used to address either increased demand for services or destabilization of operations and/or programming.

As the COVID-19 pandemic wore on, our Elgin grantees continued to experience financial needs, so **GVF provided a second round of \$155,000 in emergency grant funding to 31 organizations.**

Our trust in our grantees to utilize the funds however they needed to informed our process for moving grants out the door quickly. The emergency grants were available for all current grantees to apply for. We also worked to make sure there were minimal burdens for grantees in accessing the grant, including having a streamlined application process.

As news of COVID-19 vaccines and rollout plans became available, our Elgin Program Director Steve Moon remains in ongoing conversations with community members and grantees about vaccine access. He is also supporting the City of Elgin with its vaccine communication and access strategies to ensure that Black, Latinx, and Lao communities have equitable access to vaccines.

HOW WE CARED FOR EACH OTHER

Collaborative Leadership

GVF participated and played a leadership role in collaborative COVID-19 response funds, including the **Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund (ICRF), Elgin COVID Response Fund (ECRF), and the Chicago Community COVID-19 Response Fund.** GVF's leadership experience in both the ICRF and ECRF highlighted the potential and opportunity for us to play an instrumental role in organizing the philanthropic sector to allocate funding to communities, while also centering a racial equity and justice analysis to the work.

Our leadership in the Illinois and Elgin response funds, and also the Mapping COVID-19 Recovery Project, included encouraging the prioritization of racial equity and addressing funding gaps to communities outside of the City of Chicago.

- In the 5th round of ICRF funding, a total of \$7.5 million was awarded to seven organizations, with grants between **\$350,000 to \$2 million** provided to organizations or partnerships led by Black or Latinx leaders.
- ECRF distributed a total of **\$150,000** to the Elgin community, incorporating a racial equity analysis into its grantmaking that ensured that support was provided to communities most impacted by the pandemic.

Mapping COVID-19 Recovery Project

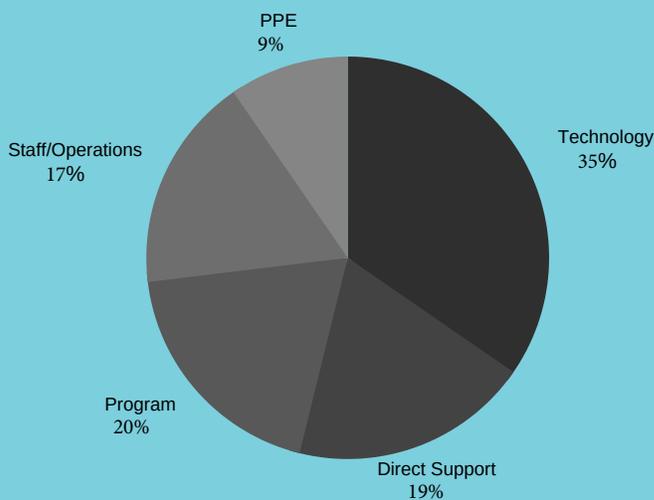
The Mapping COVID-19 Recovery Project used data to create public, downloadable maps to illustrate the relationship between the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Latinx communities and decades of disinvestment, inequitable public policy, and structural racism. Grand Victoria Foundation, along with 25 other foundations, researchers, nonprofits, public sector agencies, and private corporations submitted data to the project on how our philanthropic investments shifted in response to the pandemic. The maps are an accessible tool to help organizers, policymakers, funders, and public and private sectors help rebuild Chicago communities.

WHAT GRANTEES TAUGHT US

When identifying issues faced within their organizations and in communities served, a number of our COVID-19 Response Fund grantees spoke of the increased need for basic services within the community and the challenges of balancing staff capacity, technology capability, and appropriate safety measures needed to continue programming.

As one grantee noted, COVID-19 presented the challenge of “meeting the unanticipated needs of the community we serve while simultaneously, trying to ensure the safety of our staff.” This required grantees to prioritize providing essential services while quickly developing new strategies to continue programming.

USE OF FUNDS



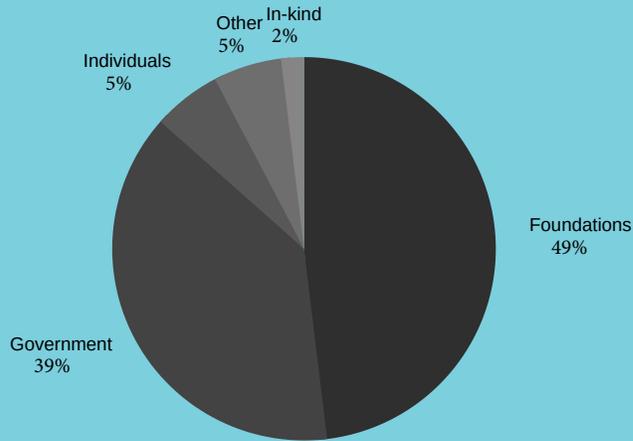
Emergency grant funds were primarily utilized in the areas of Technology, Program, and Direct Support. Technology needs largely focused on costs associated with the necessary transition to virtual operations for grantees' internal staff and creating access for program participants. This included the purchase of equipment, expanded IT support, and in some cases supporting internet access for program participants with limited access.

In addition, many organizations worked quickly to develop new strategies and implement innovative tools to shift programs to a virtual setting to continue community engagement and information sharing during the pandemic.

Other grantees focused primarily on providing direct support to community members by delivering much needed supplies such as food, diapers, formula, wipes, and cleaning supplies as well as rent support and assistance with medical expenses.

WHAT GRANTEES TAUGHT US

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

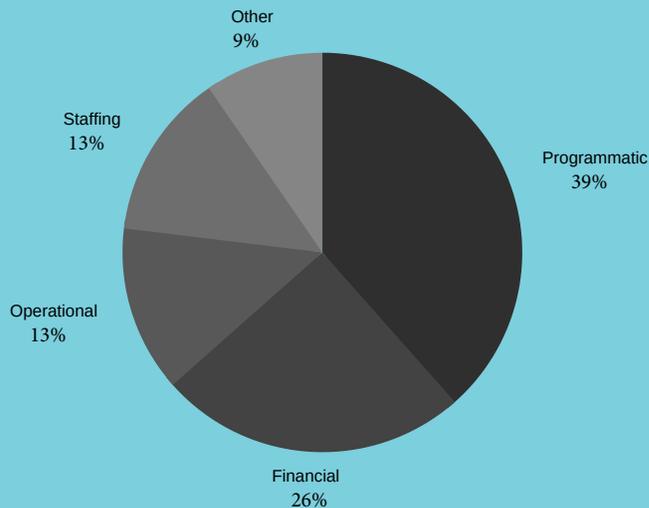


Notes About Data: 1.) 22% of Government funding includes Paycheck Protection Program Loans; and 2.) The Other category includes budget adjustments & community partners

In addition to GVF support, grantees noted a quick response from the philanthropic community, stating **“funders were quick to offer support and several of the awards were made within weeks of each other”**. This support included direct foundation funding, as well as pooled resources such as the Illinois COVID Relief Fund and the Chicago Community COVID-19 Response Fund.

Many grantees were also able to access the Paycheck Protection Program Loan to support payroll and other expenses. Others noted additional support from government sources, including increased opportunities for funding and agencies maintaining existing support. As one grantee shared, **“During such a difficult, and at times, isolating event, we experienced a profound sense of community.”**

EMERGING NEEDS



When identifying needs that have emerged as a result of the pandemic, many grantees noted the desire for the continuation of digital programs, virtual access of services, and remote learning opportunities. Others noted that there is still financial uncertainty ahead, and identified an increased need for community partners and general operating funding.

Recognizing the pandemic’s impact on staff, some grantees highlighted the importance of prioritizing staff wellness moving forward. Examples of this included the development of an internal wellness committee, mental health assistance programs, extended PTO rollover, wellness stipends, implementing “low activity” workdays and incorporating wellness activities during staff meetings.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The power of general operating funds. Flexible funding that was quickly distributed allowed organizations to address their operational and programmatic needs and provide direct assistance to communities.
- COVID-19 illuminated how big of an equity issue access to technology is. Flexible resources from philanthropy made it easier for organizations to obtain the necessary technology to deliver their services virtually and sustain operations safely.
- The demand for basic needs skyrocketed and sometimes outpaced the capacity of organizations that had unstable staffing due to shelter in place orders. Philanthropy was able to help in this regard, and granted dollars served as a bridge to Paycheck Protection Program support.
- Philanthropy pivoting to support direct cash assistance as a basic need was a key success in emergency response efforts. There is now more momentum for cash assistance to be sustained through public policy.

IMPACT

- GVF leaned in even more heavily on its commitment to providing general operating support with two rounds of COVID emergency response funding in 2020.
- We now have dedicated funding for future rapid response and collaborative grantmaking.
- We learned how to create a streamlined and expedited application process for grantees, and are working to develop processes to decrease barriers to accessing our funding going forward.
- GVF sustained our annual payout of over 5%, exceeding the IRS requirement.
- We leveraged the experience and leadership of the foundation and its staff to influence changes in grantmaking practices aligned with a racial equity lens