



# COVID-19

## REGIONAL RESPONSE FUND

March 2020 - March 2021



HUMBOLDT AREA  
FOUNDATION



# How a Global Pandemic Changed Regional Grantmaking & Community Support

In early 2020, as news of the COVID-19 virus began appearing in headlines, the world seemed to come to a stop. As regional and statewide lockdown orders were put in place, many of our community members found their economic lives turned upside down while also trying to figure out how to stay safe in the face of a new and deadly virus.

Shortly after the pandemic became a reality, the Humboldt Area Foundation (HAF) and Wild Rivers Community Foundation (WRCF) established the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund to support individuals and community organizations that suddenly found themselves on the front lines of support. In addition to the fund, the Foundation also changed how we make grants, creating a Community Response Team that could make rapid-response grants to address the immediate needs and vulnerabilities exposed by the virus. As of March 20, 2021, the Foundation has awarded nearly \$2.8 million through 218 grants from the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund to support those most vulnerable within our 10,000 square mile service region.

Within this report you'll learn the story of the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund and how a community foundation can provide critical civic leadership in the midst of a crisis. You'll learn how the Community Response Team was established, how rapid-response grants can help save lives and livelihoods in an on-going disaster or pandemic, and explore how grants were targeted to support the most crucial areas like food security, technology access, health care access, racial equity, housing, and more. Additionally, we are excited to share key lessons our response team learned during the past year.

Of course, we must acknowledge the pandemic is not over and many of our friends, families, and community members continue to have their lives forever changed by COVID-19. Much of the work supported by the Community Response Team continues to this day. As of June 2021, the team continues to meet weekly to evaluate and award grants.

## Join Us:

Your generous contribution will support ongoing efforts to support the urgent needs of our dynamic and diverse community.

[Give now](#)

## By the Numbers

**218 Grants**

**\$2.8 Million** Granted to the Community

 **\$385k** for Food Security

 **\$360k** for Housing Vulnerability

 **\$305k** for Health

 **\$143k** for Technology & Connectivity

# A Community Responds

## Creating the COVID-19 Community Response Team

In March 2020, when the Governors of California and Oregon issued statewide lockdowns in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Humboldt Area Foundation and Wild Rivers Community Foundation responded to an emerging regional crisis with the formation of a Community Response Team. The team's mission was to empower nonprofits directly responding to the pandemic through rapid-response grantmaking.

It was clear business-as-usual wasn't going to cut it. In responding to the socio-economic crisis of the pandemic, the Community Response Team first acknowledged that the traditional grant cycle, which includes weeks of applications, deliberation and reporting from grantees, was not in alignment with what front-line organizations truly needed. That's why the foundation re-assigned nearly all staff members to engage in community outreach; calling more than 500 community members partners to discover what they were seeing and what help they needed. We also reduced the grant cycle from the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund to one week or less. This new time frame allowed funds to reach organizations quickly, positioning them to respond with strength, increased capacity and tools required to truly serve those who were most impacted by the pandemic.

To learn more about the HAF & WRCF operating region, including a full map, demographic info, and regional Tribal Nations, please see [Appendix 1](#).

## Giving That Makes a difference

Between March 20, 2020 and March 20, 2021 the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund distributed 218 grants totaling \$2,790,386. What made this possible? Of course there was the shared sense of urgency to respond to a new and changing pandemic and the generous support of our donors and funders ([Appendix 4](#)). More than 250 individuals and organizations contributed over \$3.3 million to the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund, which has helped thousands in our region.

Beyond the generous financial support, the Foundation's Community Response Team owes its success to a remarkable group of people and organizations that spoke up and became receptive to our outreach efforts. During COVID-19, it became clear that one appropriate role for a community foundation is to serve as a centralized organization for people and funders to contribute during a time of crisis. This role proved effective due to our knowledgeable and diverse community members.

Through thousands of collective hours of outreach we heard from individuals and organizations about what they needed to serve their communities and what the best solutions were. During that process of collaborative outreach and analysis, the Foundation discovered the following 13 theme areas that describe the greatest impacts on our community and provided a pathway to response and recovery:



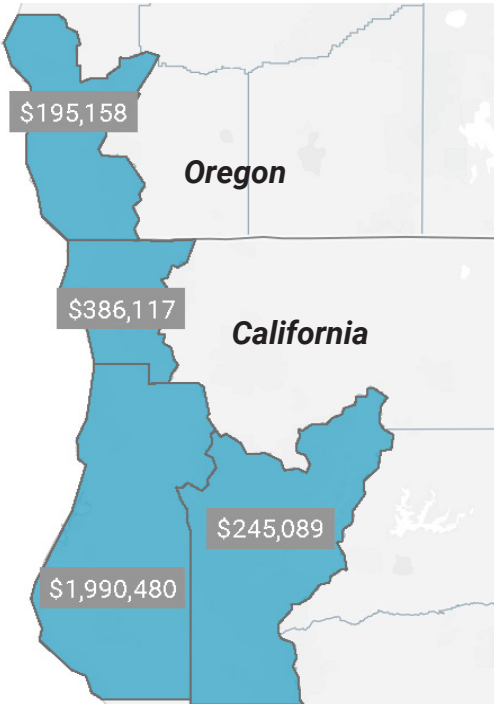
# Community Response Grants by Theme

Primary Theme	Amount Distributed	Number of Grants
Food Security	\$385,735	31
Housing Vulnerability & Housing Veterans	\$360,961	31
Native American/Racial Health & Economic Disparities	\$251,500	23
Children & Adult Education	\$180,421	23
First Responders & Essential Workers	\$269,804	20
Health/Mental Health & Hygiene	\$305,820	18
Seniors & People with Disabilities	\$185,314	16
Connectivity & Technology	\$143,950	16
Migrants, Legal Assistance & Language Translation	\$291,001	13
Substance Abuse & Domestic Violence	\$111,895	13
Economic Development & Capacity Building	\$185,000	10
Mobility & Rural Distribution	\$78,985	3
LGBTQI+ Equity, Safety & Belonging	\$40,000	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$2,790,386</b>	<b>218</b>

For a full list of grants and their corresponding theme areas, see [Appendix 2](#).

## Amount granted per capita by county

County/Region	Regional Pop. (%)	Grants Recv'd. (%)
Curry County, Oregon	11%	6%
Del Norte County, Calif.	14%	14%
Humboldt County, Calif.	68%	69%
Trinity County, Calif.	6%	9%





# Co-disasters Highlight Need For Community Support

In the Summer and Fall of 2020 wildfires also raged in the region, displacing families, farms and businesses and doubling down on the crisis of the pandemic. The wildfires increased the need for housing, food and other services, resulting in the Foundation responding with an increased distribution of resources.

To support those who were affected by the wildfires, the Foundation awarded over \$700,000 in grants with more than 70% of that amount given to Tribal communities. The Foundation is also exploring ways to support cultural burning, a traditional Indigenous practice of using fire to clear vegetation, increase capacity for fire response, and building capacity between Tribal communities and Volunteer Fire Departments to help with wildfire prevention and response.

The pandemic also brought racial disparities to the foreground of our emergent response as socio-economic, political and financial variables stemming from racial and historical oppressions resulted in disproportionate consequences for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

The Foundation believed that disproportionate impacts of the pandemic demand substantial resources, and granted heavily to local organizations that serve BIPOC individuals with or without legal status.

Although many grants were given to nonprofits that serve the general population of our region, others were given to nonprofits and Tribal Nations to specifically serve BIPOC communities.

Totals given to serve specific communities for COVID response in Curry, Del Norte, Humboldt, and Trinity counties where we are able to define data include:

Racial Demographic/Grant Amnt.	Regional Population	Percent of Grants Recv'd
African American- \$29,000	.5% - 3.5%	1%
Asian American- \$18,000	.8% - 3.1%	1%
Latinx and Hispanic \$346,203	7.4% - 20.1%	12%
Native American \$529,402	2.6% - 9.7%	19%
General Population- \$1,867,781		67%

# Lessons Learned From a Year of Community Response

Throughout the process of collaborating with partners and local organizations, HAF and WRCF have learned valuable lessons about the state of our current social, economic, and political systems. In many cases, COVID-19 has brought additional pressure to these systems, revealing the need for change and the part community foundations can play. Below are some key lessons we discovered during the past year. We sincerely hope you will find these insights as valuable as we have:

## **Rural is Not a “Monoculture”**

With more than 20 sovereign Tribal Nations and a service region about the size of Massachusetts, there is incredible diversity in our rural and remote communities. Understanding these different needs is critical to creating effective community response strategies.

## **Maintain and Participate in Networks for Sharing, Exchanging, and Listening**

The more information you can share about strategy, opportunities, and challenges, the more opportunities for collaboration and mutual support both within the organization and with external partners.

## **Be Brave and Spend**

Pandemics and other on-going disasters are not ‘normal’ times. They require increased investment in and support for the community. As a response, the HAF Board of directors voted to increase the endowment payout to our region by \$500,000.

## **Support and Build Cultural Infrastructure Before Disaster Strikes**

We found that local Hmong, Lao, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx neighbors had systems of community care that were created from distinct cultural values and relationships. Each was strengthened by a unique cultural tradition. Tribal governments were far ahead of all other levels of government on public safety, being among the first to declare a state of emergency, establish rent relief, coordinate food distribution, and more.

## **Learn More:**

Review our full list of the [LESSONS LEARNED](#) by the community Response Team.



Volunteers at Hmong Cultural Center in Del Norte County.

# Further Reading

For a more in-depth look at the data collected by HAF and WRCF during the pandemic:

## Appendices:

- 1) [Regional Context](#)
- 2) [Grants By Theme Tables](#)
- 3) [Lessons Learned from COVID-19 Response](#)
- 4) [Complete List of Our Generous Donors & Funders](#)

\*[Download the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund Initial Report 2020](#)

## About Humboldt Area Foundation & Wild Rivers Community Foundation

Since 1972, the Humboldt Area Foundation's mission is to promote and encourage generosity, leadership and inclusion to strengthen our communities. HAF serves as community facilitator and organizer. This central role includes capacity and community building; distributing more than \$7.5 million in grants in 220-21; servicing local loans to support socially responsible investing; and encouraging and facilitating charitable giving to strengthen our region. HAF also operates a regional affiliate, the Wild Rivers Community Foundation. Established in 2004, WRCF has been serving a vital and unique role in Del Norte and Curry counties.

Together, our vision is to enable and empower this unique region to thrive as a just, healthy, and equitable place for current and future generations.

### Our goals include:

- Racial Equity
- Thriving Youth and Families
- Healthy Ecosystems and Environment
- A Just Economy and Economic Development

(Read more about our strategic vision and multi-decade goals at [hafoundation.org](http://hafoundation.org).)

HAF and WRCF support a family of organizations, initiatives, and programs, including:



Leavey Ranch, LLC

The Del Norte Nonprofit Alliance



# Thank You Generous Donors & Partners

HAF and WRCF have been incredibly fortunate to receive the extraordinary support, partnership, expertise and elbow grease of so many people over the past year. The following is a list of partners who have contributed to the success of the fund.

A complete list of funders and donors can be found in Appendix 4 (see link on Page 7).

## Foundations & Institutional Partners

