



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

## Northern Illinois Center for Nonprofit Excellence

**Press Release**

**Monday, March 30, 2020**

### **Leaders Respond to Nonprofit Needs Providing Resources and Funding**

NICNE committed to learning more about the immediate, emerging and potential long-term impacts of COVID-19 on nonprofit organizations in our region. On Tuesday, March 17th, NICNE administered a survey for local nonprofits requesting information about staff, volunteers, program and event cancellations, and organizational needs. More than 115 nonprofits submitted responses from organizations of varying sizes and budget sizes.

Overall, 84% of responding organizations are already experiencing significant impact to their programs, services, and general operations, and they anticipate that this impact will continue to intensify. Specifically, organizations are experiencing high levels of disruption to their ability to provide services (75%) and their ability to generate revenue (84%).

Many are also experiencing increased and sustained staff and volunteer absences (58%), disruptions to supplies/services provided by partners (32%) and some experience an increased demand for services (24%).

We heard one consistent message from across the nonprofit community: Several organizations need flexible financial resources now. Based on data, NICNE recommends that funders consider:

- General operating support
- Funding extensions
- Restricted grants changed to unrestricted
- Eased reporting and application rules for grants
- Extended reporting deadlines

NICNE sent a second survey to nonprofit organizations on March 23<sup>rd</sup> to garner detailed information on specific supports needed for delivery of immediate, critical services to nonprofit program participants. The survey revealed that the immediate needs of most nonprofits responding include:

- Basic necessities for participants;
- Cash flow to meet critical service provisions (i.e. food pantries, meal deliveries, sanitation equipment and supplies, etc.)
- Child care resources
- Protective gear and supplies
- Eviction and homelessness prevention support
- Enhanced technology to deliver services
- Paper supplies



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This data informs our ability to develop a response to the crisis and a strategy for recovery. With data in hand, NICNE convened various partners: United Way of Rock River Valley, Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, The Kjellstrom Foundation, The Workforce Connection, and Transform Rockford. A Community Response Team, made up of these leaders, began meeting a week ago and is:

- Providing up-to-date information about funding and loan options and best practices resources
- Evaluating funding needs based on local data
- Setting broad, flexible funding parameters
- Convening funders for a coordinated response
- Developing a website with information on local, national, and regional funding opportunities and resources
- Communicating with the community on needed, coordinated resources necessary to meet service and delivery demands
- Planning for mobilization of volunteers when shelter-in-place is lifted

The Community Response Team (CRT) has developed a three-level funding strategy to respond to the needs of the nonprofit sector:

**Level I** – Immediate and basic needs for individuals - Natural Disaster Fund available now for Winnebago County residents and distributed through the City of Rockford Human Services Office. <https://815crt.org/for-nonprofits>

**Level II** – Nonprofit agency funds for critical service delivery- available now through the United Way of Rock River Valley Emerging Needs Fund. <https://www.unitedwayrrv.org/covid-19>. Additional dollars are needed and donations can be made through the UW site.

**Level III** — Nonprofit agency funds for continuity/restoration of daily operations. Level III Recovery and Restoration Fund has a lead gift from The Kjellstrom Foundation with additional dollars to be raised. A simple funding strategy is being designed to address the operational needs of nonprofits experiencing budgetary losses due to disruptions in services, absences in staff and volunteers, budgetary implications, etc. These funds will be distributed when health professionals determine it is safe for employees to return to work, government opportunities are considered, and grant criteria is defined. This fund will challenge other Family, Community and Corporate Foundation to pool their resources in support of nonprofits facing serious operational issues as a result of the pandemic.

To learn more about the Community Response Team and the funds and resources available to nonprofits in Northern Illinois, visit the website at [www.815crt.org](http://www.815crt.org) contact Pam Clark Reidenbach, NICNE, [pclark1@niu.edu](mailto:pclark1@niu.edu) or reach out to any of the organizations on the CRT.

NICNE is a nonprofit organizations affiliated with Northern Illinois University focused on promoting and growing innovation, excellence and social impact. They have been a part of the Rockford region for 16 years offering education, training, resource supports, and initiative leadership. For more information on NICNE, please contact Pam Clark Reidenbach, 815-494-6815, [pclark1@niu.edu](mailto:pclark1@niu.edu).



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