

OC LEADER BOARD | Opinion, Analysis, Insight

Introducing a Fund to Help Our Most Vulnerable Neighbors

Our world is facing a pandemic unprecedented in its scale and scope.

COVID-19 continues to test the capacity of our healthcare systems on every level and shake our economic structures to the core. It's altered nearly every aspect of our daily lives—from how we work to how we interact with family and friends.

As disruptive as these challenges are to our individual lives, COVID-19 has burdened our nonprofit sector and the vulnerable populations it serves in ways previously unimaginable.

As philanthropic leaders, we recognize the critical need to act with strategy and urgency to support local nonprofit organizations, as well as communities hit hardest by the impacts of COVID-19. Which is why in mid-March, **Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF), St. Joseph Community Partnership Fund, Orange County Grantmakers and Charitable Ventures** launched a collaborative response—the **OC Community Resilience Fund**—to meet the significant and immediate needs facing our community.

A prolonged pandemic will threaten the survival of our most vulnerable communities and our nonprofit organizations. Take for example the fact that children no longer receiving meals in schools, seniors who are shut-in and isolated, and families impacted by early layoffs and business closures are already overwhelming the resources of local food banks.

Add to this the scores of safety-net organizations like community health clinics and homeless providers being barraged by need while suffering the loss of vital support due to canceled fundraising events and slowing donations, not to mention the loss of their volunteer labor force due to social distancing, and you have a perfect storm of need and destabilization of our nonprofit infrastructure at the time it is needed most.

Stronger Together

Given the scope of this unprecedented need, collaborative action is essential. Since we launched on March 16, the Fund has surpassed \$2.5 million in contributions. We have awarded the first round of grants totaling \$1 million to local organizations tackling the growing impact of COVID-19 on our most vulnerable communities. The fund allows us to focus resources, share infrastructure, reduce duplicative

efforts, support innovative responses, and maximize impact in areas of greatest need.

Together, we can effectively triage needs, responding to emergency requests, keeping open lines of communication between donors and organizations, and building a plan to provide longer-term support that incorporates what we are hearing from our front-line nonprofit providers to meet the challenges to the community that are to come.

We can work in partnership with other funders to make aligned grants. By pooling funds, we can reduce grant administration and grant application burden on all participants, which in turn will allow us to better support local nonprofits. We can also ensure all funds go directly to those who need them most, with OCCF and St. Joseph Community Partnership Fund covering 100% of the administrative costs associated with this pooled fund.

The Fund will award grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 to local nonprofits that support our county's most vulnerable residents, including veterans, low-income seniors, households under the poverty line, children of all ages and their families, and individuals who are homeless, disabled or underinsured. Specifically, the OC Community Resilience Fund will:

- **Back community clinic operations** in providing preventive care and medical services for those caring for uninsured or underinsured patients to offset the costs of uncompensated care

- **Issue emergency grants to individuals** quarantined due to personal illness or caring for a family member, business closures and/or layoffs and school or other

community program closures and/or layoffs.

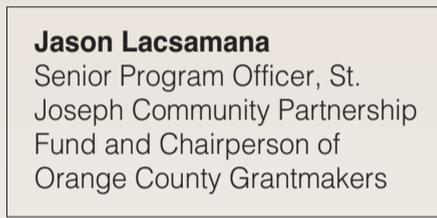
- **Support community-based organizational operations** for nonprofits serving populations directly impacted by the medical or economic effects of the pandemic.

While it may be months before we understand our collective new "normal," one thing is for sure: we are stronger when we work together. A widespread, coordinated relief effort can generate a response for which our community can be truly proud.

We invite you to join this collaborative force. To be a part of this vital mobilization of resources serving Orange County's most vulnerable residents, visit www.charitableventuresoc.org/resilience-fund.



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