

Pandemic Grantmaking Our Mission at Work

Connections

Just about everything in our day-to-day operations changed as the pandemic emerged. But the one thing that never changed was our focus on mission.

In mid-March, as COVID-19 began gaining a foothold, Foundation staff examined work habits, processes, and partnerships to determine how to respond in an effective, mission-driven way.

Recognizing a clear opportunity for collaboration, our staff worked with Stark Community Foundation on a coordinated funding response. We offered to serve as the first point of contact, triage all inquiries, and process all applications through our online grantmaking system. We had already drafted a streamlined, pandemic-focused

Over the span of just 9 weeks, our 14 collaborative funders awarded \$1,677,749 to 33 organizations.

application and configured it for virtual use. The Sisters of Charity and Stark Community foundations jointly reached out to other community funders to garner interest.

Within days, all staff were working remotely, the new application went live, and our first pandemic-focused electronic newsletter was sent to inform the community about the collaborative funding opportunity. That was the easy part.

The response was overwhelming. We received over a hundred emails and calls from organizations wanting to learn more. If an inquiry fit the collaborative's priorities, the organization was instructed on how to apply. As applications were submitted, staff members reviewed, asked questions, and summarized for the collaborative partners, who met virtually to make funding commitments.

The process was similar to our normal grantmaking procedures. This time, though, everything happened over a matter of days, instead of weeks or months. And everything happened electronically. No more on-site visits to meet with prospective grantees. No more in-person proposal review meetings. Staff converted all communications and document signing to electronic formats, and grantees received checks safely—and more quickly than ever before.

We've learned a lot about how flexible, resilient, and collaborative we all can be in the face of the unexpected. That flexibility will remain with us: we are committed to retaining many of our streamlined processes after the danger of the pandemic has passed.

We hope our adaptability reflects our drive to serve our hardworking, committed nonprofit partners, whose missions help us achieve our own. ✨

Collaborative Funders

Austin-Bailey Health and Wellness Foundation

City of Canton

Deuble Foundation

Gessner Family Foundation

Health Foundation of Greater Massillon

Hoover Foundation

Massillon Rotary Foundation

North Canton Medical Foundation

Paul and Carol David Foundation

PNC Foundation

Timken Foundation

Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton

Stark Community Foundation

William and Minnette Goldsmith Foundation

