

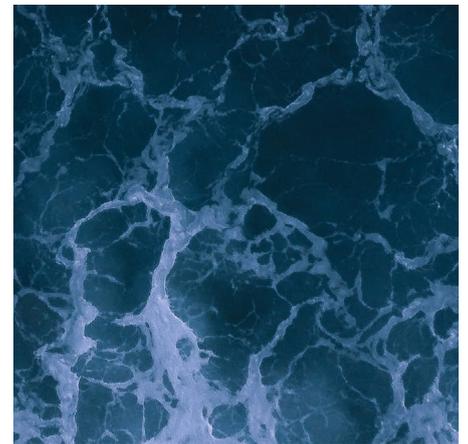
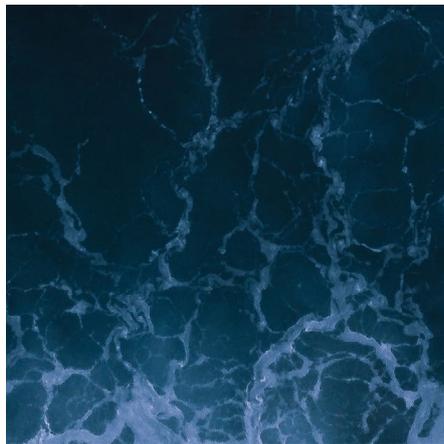
Effective Disaster Relief and Recovery Response: A “How-to” Primer for Philanthropists

July 2020



COVID-19 & the non-profit sector: how can philanthropists help?
Four action steps

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Effective Disaster Relief and Recovery Response

- Introduction
- COVID-19 & the non-profit sector: how can philanthropists help?
- Blueprints for impact: some relevant examples
- Additional information sources to consider
- Sample letters to grantees

“The health, economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have already been dramatic. Philanthropists can help communities and societies they care about to meet the resulting challenges.”

Publication of Lombard Odier

Dr Maximilian Martin,
Global Head of Philanthropy, Lombard Odier

Important information

Please read important information at the end of this document.

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White Paper #5
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A “How-to” Primer for Philanthropists

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1 – Introduction

Dear Reader,

The 2020s have kicked off with a rare intensity of challenge to the public good: geopolitical and trade confrontation among the great powers, paired with the onset of the deepest global recession for several generations, triggered and compounded by the coronavirus pandemic. For those who labour for the public good in the third sector – be it as philanthropic funders or civil society professionals – coronavirus will bring a number of system-changing impacts. To the extent possible, it is wise to anticipate them, and to prepare.

Since its founding in Geneva in 1796, Lombard Odier has witnessed – and successfully mastered – a number of system-changing crises, including two World Wars and the Great Depression. At Lombard Odier Philanthropy Services, we are now putting forward this short disaster and recovery primer as a resource for philanthropists who want to help the charities they care about get through the crisis, as well as getting ready to lend support to the wider post-COVID non-profit sector rebuilding effort that will soon begin. The guide aims not to explain everything, but rather to be a useful “how-to” resource enabling philanthropic funders to be effective in tackling the challenges ahead.

Only high-performing non-profits, still able to keep punching above their weight after the pandemic recedes, can be expected to lend essential support to the less fortunate. This conviction is the guiding principle behind our choice of grantees discussed in this white paper.

This brief primer is contextualised in the Covid-19 crisis and covers the following topics:

- COVID-19 and the non-profit sector: how can philanthropists help?
- Blueprints for impact: what are some inspiring examples to have on the radar?
- Additional information sources to consider
- Sample letters to grantees

In this spirit, I hope that this resource is helpful to your philanthropic endeavours, and I invite you to contact us in case you wish to draw on our passion and professional competences in the service of your philanthropic goals during these times of epochal transformation.



Dr Maximilian Martin,
Global Head of Philanthropy

2 – COVID-19 & the non-profit sector: how can philanthropists help?

In only a few months, the health, economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have already been dramatic. Philanthropists can make an important contribution to meeting the resulting challenges for the communities and societies where they work.

In a recent survey of its members, the European Foundation Centre (EFC) – Europe’s largest membership platform of grant-making foundations – found that the following are the four most-cited ways that philanthropic funders can intervene to best support their grantees:¹

- Financial support;
- Making networks and connections available;
- Providing expertise and advisory services;
- Information sharing, knowledge and research.

The pandemic’s exact effects on people and the non-profits who come to their support vary greatly. Nonetheless, forward-looking philanthropic funders now have four action steps to consider (see **Figure 1**):

- Step 1: From which point of departure does the foundation face the COVID pandemic?
- Step 2: How to offer support to non-profits and beneficiaries during the immediate shock of the pandemic;
- Step 3: How to support the recovery phase; and finally
- Step 4: How to boost non-profit resilience more generally: what kind of not-for-profit sector do we need post-COVID, and how can it be (re)built?

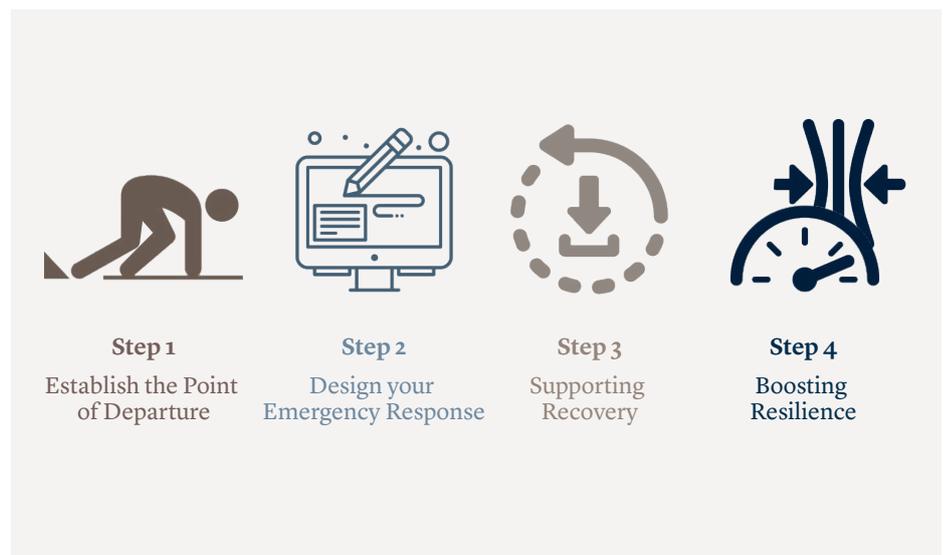
Step 1: Establish the point of departure

To assess how to best help social purpose organisations in times of crisis, it is important to be aware of one’s own point of departure. The simplest way to achieve this is by convening an extraordinary board meeting. This meeting should cover the following dimensions (see **Figure 2**):

- Operations: Given public health requirements and travel constraints, can the foundation keep its staff safe while continuing to fulfil its mission? If so, how?
- Foundation assets: How has the COVID pandemic affected the foundation’s own financial investments, solvency and liquidity? What are the implications for its 2020 and 2021 budgets? Will it be able to provide extra budget for the disaster response?

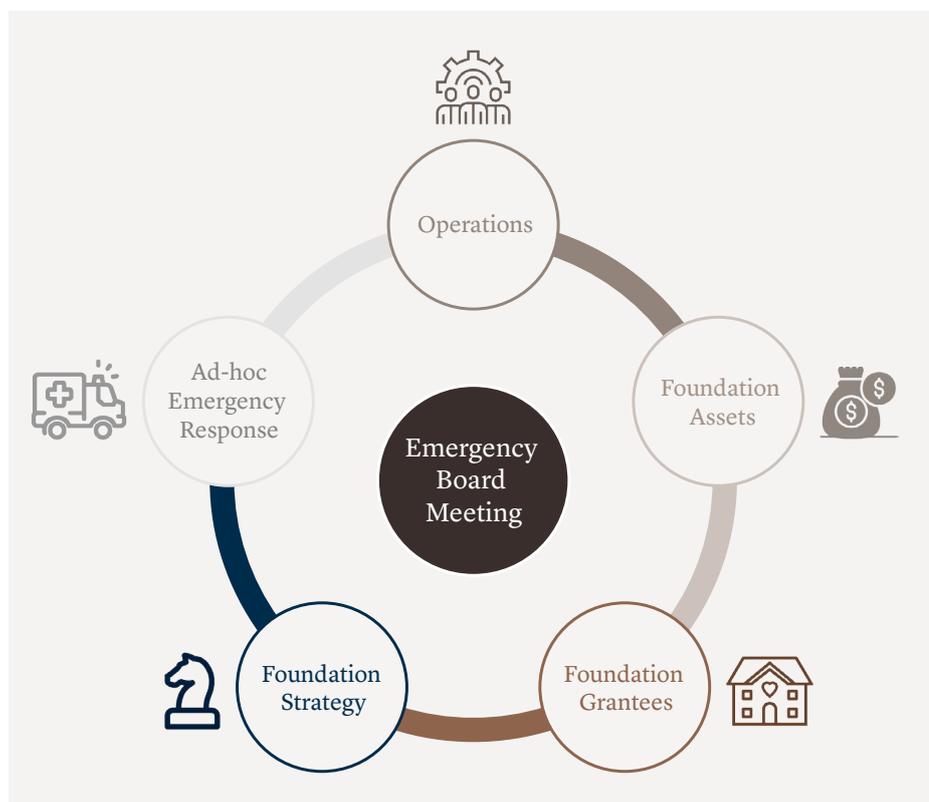
- Foundation grantees: How is COVID impacting the situation of the foundation’s grantees and partners? What can the foundation do to gain clarity about the situation, and be helpful?
- Foundation strategy: Given the COVID context, if part of the work the foundation funds cannot be implemented currently – for example, because public health constraints do not permit carrying out certain projects – how should the foundation respond to this?
- Ad-hoc emergency response: Apart from the foundation’s core strategy, given the massive increase in social needs, should the foundation now make new grants? If so, in which areas and according to which principles?

Figure 1: Pacing your philanthropic COVID response in four steps



¹ European Foundation Centre. *EFC members’ responses to the COVID-19 pandemic: Results from EFC survey, March-June 2020*. 25 June 2020. Accessed on 7 July 2020 at <https://www.efc.be/news-post/efc-publishes-efc-members-responses-to-covid-19-pandemic/>.

Figure 2: Topics to cover at a COVID response extraordinary board meeting



Step 2: Design your emergency response

With its point of departure established, the foundation is now in a position to decide rationally how to structure its emergency response. What makes the most sense depends on many factors; we encourage you to explore the resource sections in this white paper (see **sections 4 and 5**) and be inspired by the valuable work many other foundations are doing (see **section 3**).

For illustration, let us now examine one specific case, Fondation Lombard Odier and its COVID-19 Relief Initiative. This is not to say that other foundations should follow the same approach, but in

the how-to spirit of this primer, this case demonstrates how one can be structured and strategic in order to unlock high social impact with finite resources.

In a dedicated special board meeting shortly after the onset in Switzerland of the Covid-19 pandemic, Fondation Lombard Odier decided to launch a dedicated COVID-19 Relief Initiative. As of 30 June 2020, the Foundation had committed over 90 per cent of the initial budget of the initiative, funding interventions across more than ten countries in Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

To provide a clear strategic thread in light of the scale of the needs generated by the pandemic, the Foundation chose to focus its emergency response on vulnerable groups other than the elderly, in order to direct support towards populations who might have otherwise been forgotten. Starting from this theme, the Foundation then articulated five key principles to guide the selection of beneficiaries, each of which is presented below with an illustrative example of a grantee.

First and foremost, the Foundation decided to favour a **rapid response**, so that the money donated would arrive in the near term, when it was most needed. For example, the Foundation was impressed by the initiative taken by La Tuile, an organisation in Fribourg, Switzerland, that in normal times manages a homeless shelter and restaurant, which it knew well.² As their restaurant had to close, the organisation launched a project to take over an abandoned hotel and turn it into a quarantine shelter for homeless people showing symptoms of COVID-19. This sort of quick thinking, leveraging one's existing grantee network and rapid response is necessary in times of crisis, and led the Foundation to support La Tuile in their efforts.

The second principle is that the Foundation wanted to **respond to the most pressing needs** in each area of intervention. A good example of this is the Foundation's support to Partage, a Geneva-based food bank. Geneva—and indeed the whole of Switzerland—reacted in shock to the images, first broadcast in late April and early May, of thousands of people lined up at the city's hockey rink to receive parcels of basic

² La Tuile. "La Tuile - Pandémie et mesures en cours." 18 March 2020. Accessed on 7 July 2020 at <https://www.la-tuile.ch/la-tuile-pandemie-et-mesures-en-cours/>.

food necessities. These distributions, which are now organised by Partage, revealed the precarious situation of many of Geneva’s informal workers, and were therefore a logical target for support via the COVID-19 Relief Initiative.

Third, the Foundation decided to **focus its interventions in areas where the Lombard Odier Group has a physical presence**. This not only allowed it to draw on the knowledge and connections of its local office staff, but reinforce the Foundation’s commitment to the communities where we work. In London, for example, Lombard Odier employees had recently taken part in actions to support The Felix Project, a food bank that serves schools and other charitable organisations, so the Foundation was happy to follow their lead and donate to The Felix Project as well.

The next principle is related to the previous one: where possible, the Foundation decided to **draw on existing partnerships with local foundations** to select beneficiaries. This allowed it to access the local knowledge of organisations with whom it has a track record of collaboration and a relationship of trust. In Spain, for example, Fondation Lombard Odier has been working since 2017 with the Fundación “La Caixa,” linked to the Spanish bank of the same name, in the context of the Programme for Humanitarian Impact Investment (PHII), a social impact bond focused on physical rehabilitation in Sub-Saharan Africa.³ When the Foundation decided to seek out a beneficiary in Spain, corresponding to Lombard Odier’s Madrid office, it reached out to the staff at Fundación “La Caixa,” who informed the Foundation of an ongoing programme to aid low-income families whose children were no longer in school. As this demographic fell squarely under the theme of the COVID-19 Relief Initiative, the Foundation was able to make an efficient decision and a quick donation.

The fifth and final principle was that of **immediate impact**. Just as the Foundation wanted to respond quickly, it also wanted to prioritise actions whose impact would be felt immediately. As an example, the Community Foundation of Singapore (CFS) has created a fund, the Sayang Sayang Fund, to respond to needs related to COVID-19.⁴ After discussion with CFS, Fondation Lombard Odier decided to donate to two such programmes: one for low-income children who are not currently eating lunch at school and therefore missing

meals, and one for poor and/or homeless people for whom government support is insufficient to furnish their emergency accommodations. In both cases, CFS intends to make payments to the end beneficiaries within days of receiving the money from Fondation Lombard Odier, creating significant impact very quickly.

Taken together with the theme outlined by the Board, these five principles have allowed Fondation Lombard Odier to use the budget of the COVID-19 Relief Initiative efficiently, effectively, and act rapidly. We therefore recommend to any foundations or other donors seeking to intervene in this space to similarly lay out clear guiding principles, in order to narrow the universe of possible actions and ensure maximum possible impact.

Step 3: Take part in supporting the recovery

Offering thoughtful support during the emergency is of the utmost importance. However, once the emergency has passed, the attention will shift to ensuring that non-profit organisations are able to support populations in need during the recovery phase.

A recent philanthropy breakfast briefing discussing the philanthropic response to the COVID-19 crisis, convened in May 2020 by EY, highlighted that half of UK charities expressed concern as to “whether or not they would be able to last 12 months.” Moreover, the expert meeting identified a funding gap of GBP 4.3bn in the UK alone.⁵ A number of suggestions were discussed at the meeting, including wealthy individuals “adopting a charity.”

Just like the emergency response, how philanthropic funders and foundations support the recovery will vary. There is, however, one common denominator: philanthropic resources are scarce when compared to the magnitude of the problems they seek to address, and therefore need to be directed wisely. Rather than offering a grand strategy, our main advice is to set aside some funds in the grant portfolio for the post-emergency phase, and to discuss and decide on the principles, objectives, and amounts that should apply to allocation of funds for rebuilding. In other words, adopt a method where the funder and foundation have the greatest potential to make a difference.

³ Lombard Odier. “Lombard Odier co-sponsors landmark innovative financing transaction in the humanitarian space.” September 2017. Accessed on 7 July 2020 at <https://www.lombardodier.com/contents/corporate-news/media-releases/2017/september/lombard-odier-co-sponsors-landma.html>.

⁴ Community Foundation of Singapore. “Sayang Sayang Fund.” No date. Accessed on 7 July 2020 at <https://www.cf.org.sg/2020/04/08/sayang-sayang-fund/>.

⁵ EY. “The Findings from the EY Philanthropy Breakfast Briefing XI: An overview of the philanthropy response to the COVID-19 crisis? What should we be doing as wealth managers to ensure we are responding effectively? What are philanthropists looking for?” 7 May 2020.

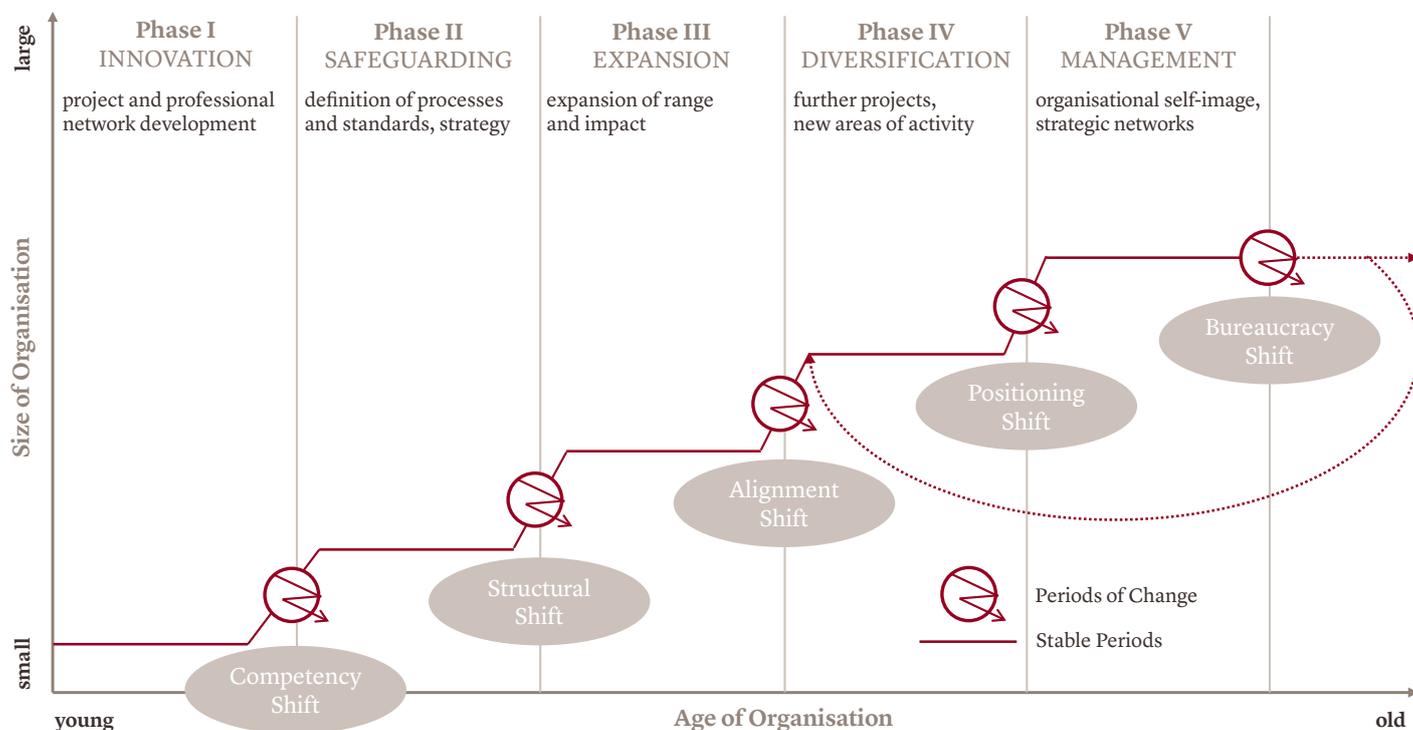
For example, in the case of Fondation Lombard Odier and its commitment to regional institutions in French-speaking Switzerland, its home region, it has already decided to offer special support to one of its grantees, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Geneva (MAMCO). This support will be used to “build the museum of the future” by digitising collections, increasing online outreach to the public, and participating in a working group with like-minded museums to work out what the museum of the future should look like.

Another “rebuilding” initiative already selected by the Foundation is incubating and financing the creation of a continued education course for non-profit leaders at the Center for Digital Trust at EPFL, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, a long-time partner of Fondation Lombard Odier often referred to as the “MIT of Europe.” In a context where non-profits will need to upgrade their IT competences post-COVID, the planned course seeks to enable participants to understand fundamental data protection challenges, interpret the technical implications of privacy, understand current digital trends such as artificial

intelligence and blockchain technologies, and communicate properly with technical experts who develop and maintain digital systems. The course is intended to enable non-profit professionals and organisations to take more leadership responsibilities in digital innovation.

One word of caution: in many cases, philanthropists will struggle to respond to outsized need. A good step in developing your recovery agenda thus consists of assessing how you might be able to collaborate with other organisations and pool resources for problem identification, stakeholder consultations, and planning and evaluation of initiatives. Such collaborations can be “vertical,” taking the form of close partnership with implementing organisations and institutions, or “horizontal,” by involving cross-sector partners such as other foundations, corporate funders and government agencies. Horizontal forms of collaboration are particularly well suited for tackling more complex systemic problems. In the post-COVID landscape, effective collaboration will be one of the most powerful means of maximising the resources at hand.

Figure 3: The non-profit development phase model (Source: CEPS)⁶



⁶ Ibid.

Step 4: Boost grantee resilience

Finally, taking a forward-looking view on interactions with grantees, it is worthwhile to ask how a funder can best boost the resilience of the non-profits she funds. To some extent, this also depends on the development stage of the grantee. Of course, every non-profit has its own story, and models may be somewhat simplistic.

Nevertheless, we find that the development phase model for non-profits, recently adapted and put forth by the Center for Philanthropy Studies (CEPS) at the University of Basel, can provide useful insights (see **Figure 3**).⁷

In this logic, non-profits go through phases of stable development and step change. In the context of COVID, it matters quite a bit whether a grantee was already in the middle of such a step change, or in a phase of relative stability.

The CEPS model identifies four such step changes, which they call “crises”:

- First, after the end of the pioneering phase, in which every team member needs to do everything, the non-profit faces a “competency crisis.” At this development stage, specific knowledge is needed in new areas, such as fundraising, communications, human resources, and so on. When the non-profit becomes more specialised, it needs to succeed in building up these competencies. From a post-COVID perspective, such early-stage non-profits carry the greatest key person risk – they depend on a few doers that carry the mission. But their budgets are also typically quite small, and a funder’s commitment to get such an organisation through the crisis can be very powerful without being excessively costly.
- Second, non-profits who already are at a stage where they have strong internal processes and a differentiation of roles eventually head for a step change which CEPS calls a “structural crisis.” To grow, the non-profit must now expand its structure, roll out existing services more widely, and develop new ones. In the post-COVID context, where fundraising will generally become more difficult, raising the annual fundraising requirement for an organisation only makes sense if the non-profit focuses on areas that see an additional influx of funds, such as in the health services domain.
- Third, the non-profits in the next development stage eventually run into an “alignment crisis.” They have the skills and structures that are necessary to develop and expand new services, and the organisation’s original objective now often seems too narrow. Non-profits in this stage sooner or later need to reflect and possibly reorient themselves in fundamental ways, which may require steps like changing the name of the organisation. Rebranding is best accomplished using specialist competencies, and if done well, can make a difference to a non-profit’s development path. For example, “Future Educators of America,” a U.S. non-profit working primarily with high school students and trying to get them excited and engaged in becoming teachers, changed its name into “Educators Rising” as it developed. This offered a solution to one problem: high school students did not want to wear the acronym for Future Educators of America, FEA, on their shirts because “fea” means “ugly” in Spanish, and many of the non-profit’s constituents were Hispanic.⁸ Our view here is simple: try to hold steady in the crisis and help secure the core operations and funding of the non-profits you care about, rather than embarking on major change initiatives other than ones that increase your effectiveness in fundraising and programme management. After the immediate crisis is weathered, re-focusing and re-branding could however make sense, provided this helps the non-profit to better serve its clients and access funding.
- Finally, large non-profits eventually need to deal with a “positioning crisis.” They have the visibility, institutional knowledge and competencies to run and fundraise for a clearly defined portfolio of services. This is a good place to be in. If further development is needed, for example because an issue or policy context is changing, a re-positioning would be needed. For organisations at this level, donor support to fund work that helps the non-profit spend time to better understand how their operating context could look like post-COVID is valuable. The COVID pandemic will likely alter the public’s relative attention to specific social issues and the feasibility of using donations to fund efforts to fight these issues, and it is wise to prepare for these changes ahead of time.

⁷ Source: Center for Philanthropy Studies. “The structural development of NPOs.” *Philanthropie Aktuell* #02/20. June 2020. Accessed on 7 July 2020 at https://ceps.unibas.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/ceps/1_Home/Philanthropie_Aktuell/PA_20_02_en.pdf.

⁸ Sara Durham, Dan Gunderman, and Farra Trompeter. “Should you rename your non-profit?” 12 March 2019. Accessed on 7 July 2020 at <https://bigduck.com/insights/nonprofit-renaming/>.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our experience suggests that philanthropists can be most helpful by offering support during the initial emergency phase, as well as reserving some of their support for targeted initiatives in the recovery and rebuilding phases.

What exactly this looks like depends on too many factors to offer a simple “magic” formula for every donor.

Listening to one’s grantees is important to get it right.

In a nutshell, basing one’s decision on awareness of where one’s philanthropic passions lie, sound analysis of one’s own constraints and possibilities, as well as the situation of one’s grantees, is the most effective way to create impact and success, rather than simply being overwhelmed by the dramatic need we currently see.

3 – Blueprints for impact: some relevant examples

In times of crisis, we cannot automatically assume that all solutions how to best support one’s grantees and beneficiaries exist already, or are readily available. The COVID pandemic is no different, and looking at how foundation peers are going about their response can serve as a valuable source of inspiration.

Questions to answer

Inspiration is important, but must ultimately be translated into practical, actionable questions and decisions. Relevant questions for any philanthropic effort that seeks to respond to the pandemic include:

- **Communication:** Our grantees are the actors through whom we reach beneficiaries on the ground. What should we communicate to the grantees – and how?
- **Additional funding:** In terms of COVID relief, what should we fund out of our current programme budget? To what extent should we set aside an additional COVID relief budget?
- **Allocation of funds:** How should the funds be deployed? Should we favour existing grantees, or also add new ones that we have not financed previously?
- **New solutions:** In a short span of time, COVID has revealed massive vulnerabilities among groups such as the poor, the homeless, and minorities. How should we go about sourcing new solutions? For example, should we implement a scientific process involving calls for proposals?

In the *how-to* spirit of this primer, we invite the reader to have a look at several practical examples of how leading philanthropic actors in Switzerland and around the world are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic as of July 2020. In case you want to look at a specific example in greater depth, we encourage you to consult the resources provided by these foundations online.

Where to look for inspiration

In the resource section of this white paper (**section 4**), there are links to a number of high-quality philanthropy platforms around the world that feature the work of their charitable member organisations, including their responses to the COVID pandemic. In Switzerland, two valuable dynamic resources on COVID-related foundation initiatives are:

- The COVID-19 page of the SwissFoundations website, where members post what they are working on.⁹ Materials are typically available in German and in French.
- Helpful information in German and French can also be located at the website of proFonds, another association of Swiss charitable foundations.¹⁰

Foundation practice examples

The following foundations are among the many that have created inspiring, practical responses to the COVID pandemic (see **Figure 4** for the geographic locations of the foundations referred to in this white paper).

Supporting research first

Rapid response is one of the prerogatives of foundations that decide to act. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, **Foundation Botnar** philanthropically invests in emerging solutions to build a better future for children and young people globally. In March 2020, the Foundation responded sixteen days after the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a pandemic, committing CHF 20 million to global research efforts around COVID-19.¹¹ This includes CHF 15 million for the Botnar Research Centre for Child Health in Basel, and CHF 5 million for EPFL, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne. CHF 3.5 million of the EPFL funding is being used to support development of a tracking app for coronavirus infections.

⁹ SwissFoundations. “Covid-19.” No date. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.swissfoundations.ch/covid-19/>.

¹⁰ proFonds. “Informations utiles.” 23 June 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.profonds.org/index.php?id=271>.

¹¹ Fondation Botnar. “Fondation Botnar commits CHF 20 million to global research efforts around COVID-19.” 27 March 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.fondationbotnar.org/fondation-botnar-commits-chf-20-million-to-global-research-efforts-around-covid-19/>.

Figure 4: Select COVID foundation response examples by geography



Immediate stopgap support

Many foundations also have deep local knowledge that puts them in a good position to help. The **Christoph Merian Stiftung**, also based in Basel, is focused on four programme areas: social issues, culture, nature, and the urban living space. Social and cultural organisations were hard hit by the shutdown and social distancing requirements in the first phase of the pandemic, and the Foundation reacted quickly. It put together an instant relief effort, committing a total of CHF 1.45 million for the poor, and social and cultural organisations, especially those who cannot find funding elsewhere.¹² Additional grants of CHF 562,000 financed out of the Foundation's programmatic budget included another CHF 300,000 to retrofit the Hotel de Commerce in Basel into emergency accommodation for the homeless.¹³

Supporting culture in crisis

Given the spatial and mobility limitations imposed by COVID, foundations sometimes need to take unorthodox measures to best support their beneficiary population. For example, the **Paul Hamlyn Foundation**, based in the UK, traditionally gives out awards, known as Paul Hamlyn Foundation Awards for Artists, of GBP 60,000 to 10 artists selected from a list of nominees. Arts and culture have been hit hard in the UK and elsewhere. For 2020, the Foundation is instead giving GBP 10,000 each to everyone who was nominated (over 100 artists).¹⁴

¹² Christoph Merian Stiftung. "Soforthilfe Corona-Pandemie." No date. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.cms-basel.ch/de/foerderung/soforthilfe-corona-pandemie.html>.

¹³ Christoph Merian Stiftung. "Soforthilfe-Projekte, gefördert aus dem ersten Hilfspaket über CHF 1 Mio. Stand 1. Juli 2020." 1 July 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at https://www.cms-basel.ch/de/foerderung/soforthilfe-corona-pandemie/content/0/contentRowArea/00/contentColumnArea/01/download_website/Liste_20200701_Soforthilfe-Projekte.pdf.pdf.

¹⁴ Paul Hamlyn Foundation. "£1 million awarded to visual artists and composers in the UK." 6 April 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.phf.org.uk/news/1-million-awarded-to-visual-artists-and-composers-in-the-uk/>.

Sourcing new mental health solutions

Foundations can also decide to source new solutions. The Geneva-based **Fondation d’Harcourt** is focused on mental health and psycho-social support. The Foundation set up a COVID-19 Emergency Fund targeting Switzerland and Italy.¹⁵ Funding mental health and psychosocial support in foundations, non-profits, hospitals, and public or private clinics for up to 12-14 months, it organised a call for proposals to identify new, high-impact projects (applications closed on 30 April 2020).

Incubating a national action plan

Foundations can, furthermore, be at the core of rapidly incubating new solutions. In the United States and elsewhere, school closures have put millions of children at risk of going hungry, and reduced their access to education; closed businesses have left millions of workers without income. In New York, the **Rockefeller Foundation** quickly identified testing and contact tracing as a way to help overcome the crisis. In the span of only two weeks, the Foundation convened experts and leaders from science, industry, academia, public policy, and government, across sectors and irrespective of political ideologies, in order to create a practical, data-driven, actionable plan to overcome COVID-19 in America. The resulting National COVID-19 Testing Plan seeks to expand from 1m tests per week to 3m/week initially, then up to 30m/week within 6 months. A US\$15m grant from Rockefeller kicked off the plan, although the total cost may be as much as US\$100bn and would therefore require massive government funding.¹⁶

Supporting a national medical response

Direct support to the COVID pandemic medical response can also be seen elsewhere. In Denmark, the science-focused **Carlsberg Foundation** made an initial grant of DKK 25m (CHF 3.5m) to the project “HOPE – How Democracies Cope with COVID-19.” The project looks to “examine the interrelationship between the trajectory of COVID-19, the decisions of governments and international organisations,

the decisions of media and social media landscapes, and citizens’ behaviour and well-being” from a data-driven perspective.¹⁷ A follow-up grant of DKK 2.4m (CHF 400,000) was allocated to track the spread of disease within the Danish population.

Leveraging a foundation’s stakeholder network

One important value of foundations’ work is the breadth and depth of their grantee and stakeholder networks. With the vision of creating a better everyday life for people and reducing inequality, the **IKEA Foundation** committed up to EUR 10 million to help fund the COVID-related work of its partners within the Start Network, a network of 40 aid agencies across five continents that promotes locally created and tailored solutions to humanitarian issues. The Start Network also aims to look out for communities likely to be overlooked by national responses, like migrants and day labourers.

Leveraging grantees’ local knowledge

Foundations tend to offer the most effective help when they act on themes or in locations where they are already active and have experience. The **Open Society Foundations** (OSF) – via national and regional foundations and thematic programmes – makes thousands of grants in over 120 countries every year toward building inclusive and vibrant democracies. In its COVID response, OSF committed a total funding envelope of over US\$130m. It is noteworthy that the envelope is divided into two phases:¹⁸ a first phase of rapid-response funding is concentrated on the locations where OSF has offices, and then a second phase where OSF “will focus [their] efforts in the Global South, particularly in countries where weak institutions face both public health and economic disaster.” In addition, on Earth Day (22 April), OSF announced a Climate and COVID-19 Fund with a US\$16m envelope for “urgent climate crisis priorities related to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on advancing green stimulus plans and stopping authoritarian efforts to roll back environmental progress.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Fondation d’Harcourt. “Would you like to become a partner?” No date. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.fondationdharcourt.org/how-to-apply/>.

¹⁶ Leah Rosenbaum. “Rockefeller Foundation Announces National Coronavirus Testing Plan With \$15 Million Investment.” Forbes. 21 April 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/leahrosenbaum/2020/04/21/rockefeller-foundation-announces-national-coronavirus-testing-plan-with-15-million-investment/#673ba8dc4ae9>.

¹⁷ HOPE Project. “The Project.” No date. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://hope-project.dk/#/about>.

¹⁸ Open Society Foundations. “Open Society Foundations Aid People Hardest Hit by COVID-19 Pandemic.” 16 April 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/newsroom/open-society-foundations-aid-people-hardest-hit-by-covid-19-pandemic>.

¹⁹ Open Society Foundations. “On Earth Day, Open Society Foundations Announce Climate and COVID-19 Fund.” 22 April 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/newsroom/on-earth-day-open-society-foundations-announce-climate-and-covid-19-fund>.

Enabling strategic grantees as core to a national response strategy

Foundations can add tremendous value in the locations where they work, even when these are far away, provided they work through their grantees and partners. For example, the **Aga Khan Foundation**, set up in 1967 as a private, not-for-profit international development agency by the Aga Khan Shah Karim Al Hussaini, decided to build on an existing seven-year partnership with a Mozambican civil society platform.²⁰ The platform had previously been funded to help organisations create and deliver training courses; it has now become a method of disseminating official, verified information about COVID-19 to people who otherwise might not receive it.²¹

Funding digital scholarships

Finally, education, knowledge and information are powerful vectors to combat and its implications in the short and medium term, and an area deserving of philanthropic support. In Spain, the **IE Foundation**, focused on adding value to education and linked to the IE University, is giving out 15,500 digital scholarships, of which 10,000 are for educators who will receive training in digital instruction – in other words, how to teach classes online.²²

Conclusion

In a nutshell, with over 13,000 foundations in Switzerland alone, there are many different and valuable ways to design one's COVID relief response. In this section, we had to be selective and wanted to point to some remarkable initiatives under way. To formulate your own effective response, we recommend that you have a look at some of the resources in **section 5** that are relevant to your geography and your cause, including a coronavirus tech handbook.²³ For convenience, **section 6** provides examples of several letters to grantees explaining foundations' COVID commitments.

Your thoughtful, effective, and ambitious philanthropy is now more important than it has been for several generations. The Charities Aid Foundation found that after the 2008 financial crisis, individual giving in the UK fell by 11 percent.²⁴ The fallout from COVID is likely to be even worse. A significant proportion of non-profits' income comes from government contracts, service activities, or asset ownership, such as revenue from renting out rooms to activity groups or for conferences, and much of this revenue is likely to dry up for the near future. Just like other stores, a charity shop's sales will be adversely impacted by people staying indoors or holding on to cash because of a lack of consumer confidence. At the EY seminar referred to earlier, one expert estimated that in the UK, 40% of charities' total annual income is potentially at risk.²⁵

We hope that this primer offers useful insight and guidance as you go about designing your foundation's emergency response, as well as potentially adapting the activities you want to support going forward.

²⁰ Sarah James. "Strengthening civil society and its capacity to improve quality of life in Mozambique." 10 March 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.akf.org.uk/strengthening-civil-society-in-mozambique/>.

²¹ Sarah James. "How we're working with Civil Society in Mozambique to slow and stop the transmission of Coronavirus." 17 April 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.akf.org.uk/how-were-working-with-civil-society-in-mozambique-to-slow-and-stop-the-transmission-of-coronavirus/>.

²² IE Foundation. "Santander and IE Foundation create a fund for 15,500 digital scholarships for teachers, university students and young professionals." 2 April 2020. Accessed on 8 July 2020 at <https://www.ie.edu/ie-foundation/news/santander-and-ie-foundation-create-a-fund-for-15500-digital-scholarships-for-teachers-university-students-and-young-professionals/>.

²³ Multiple authors. *Coronavirus Tech Handbook*. Version current as of 9 July 2020. Accessed on 9 July 2020 at <https://coronavirustechhandbook.com/>.

²⁴ National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Charities Aid Foundation. *The impact of the recession on charitable giving in the UK*. 2009. Accessed on 9 July 2020 at <https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/ukgivingreport2009.pdf>.

²⁵ EY. "The Findings from the EY Philanthropy Breakfast Briefing XI: An overview of the philanthropy response to the COVID-19 crisis? What should we be doing as wealth managers to ensure we are responding effectively? What are philanthropists looking for?" 7 May 2020.

4 – Additional information sources to consider

The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the philanthropic sector is a dynamic topic that can evolve quickly as new evidence becomes available.

To be able to fund and design effective philanthropic interventions, it is important to efficiently locate sources of relevant fresh information. Next to specialist organisations that track the evolution of the pandemic and its implications for public health, such as the World Health Organization and national ministries of health, it is useful to keep an eye on reliable information sources specific to the philanthropic sector, especially in the countries and regions where a philanthropist is active.

The list below is not exhaustive, but highlights philanthropic networks that play a leading role in the regions where they are active, as well as several foundations that serve as a COVID response hub in their respective countries. Please note that while the organisations listed are known to us and of good repute, this primer does not provide any endorsement of a specific philanthropy platform, or the projects that are highlighted on it.

Africa

Africa Philanthropy Network

<https://africaphilanthropynetwork.org/>

Asia

Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN)

<https://avpn.asia/>

A Call to Action for collaborative efforts to building resilience amid the COVID-19 pandemic

<https://avpn.asia/covid-19/asian-funders-pledge/>

Asia Foundation

<https://asiafoundation.org/2020/04/23/the-asia-foundations-community-centered-response-to-covid-19/>

The Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society

<https://caps.org/>

Give2Asia

<https://give2asia.org/>

Europe

European Foundation Centre (EFC): How are EFC members mitigating the impact of COVID-19?

<https://www.efc.be/news-post/how-are-efc-members-mitigating-the-impact-of-covid-19/>

European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA)

<https://evpa.eu.com/>

European countries
(in alphabetical order)

Belgium

King Baudouin Foundation
<https://www.kbs-frb.be/en/>

France

Centre français des fonds et fondations
<https://www.centre-francais-fondations.org/>

Fondation de France
<https://www.fondationdefrance.org/en>

Germany

Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen
<https://www.stiftungen.org/startseite.html>

Ireland

Philanthropy Ireland
<http://philanthropy.ie/about-us/>

Italy

Italia non profit: Emergenza Coronavirus
<https://italianonprofit.it/aiuti-coronavirus/>

Fondazione Cariplo
<https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/it/index.html>

Luxembourg

<https://www.fdlux.lu/en>

Netherlands

FIN (Fondsen in Nederland):
Filantropie in tijden van crisis
<https://fondsenin nederland.nl/aanpak-van-de-crisis>

Russia

The Russia Donors Forum
<http://www.donorsforum.ru/projects/covid19/>

Spain

Asociación Española de Fundaciones:
Pos Covid-19
<http://www.fundaciones.org/es/pos-covid19>

Fundación “La Caixa”
<https://fundacionlacaixa.org/en/>

Switzerland

SwissFoundations
COVID-19: Informationen für
Förderstiftungen
<https://www.swissfoundations.ch/covid-19/>

ProFonds
<https://www.profonds.org/index.php?id=271>

Geneva Centre for Philanthropy
<https://www.unige.ch/philanthropie/en/>

United Kingdom

Charities Aid Foundation
<https://www.cafonline.org/covid-19-support>

New Philanthropy Capital:
How philanthropists should respond to
coronavirus: Consequences, crises and
opportunities for charities
<https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/coronavirus-guide/#jumpone>

North America

United States

Council on Foundations: A Call to Action: Philanthropy’s Commitment During Covid-19
<https://www.cof.org/news/call-action-philanthropys-commitment-during-covid-19>

Candid: Funding for coronavirus (COVID-19)
<https://candid.org/explore-issues/coronavirus>

Canada

Imagine Canada: Knowledge and Resources for Charities and Nonprofit Organisations During Covid-19
<https://www.imaginecanada.ca/en/covid19>

Latin America

Argentina

Philanthropy Center UDESA
<https://www.udesa.edu.ar/>

Brazil

Grupo de Institutos, Fundações e Empresas (GIFE)
<https://gife.org.br/>

Colombia

Asociación de Fundaciones Familiares y Empresariales – AFE Colombia
<https://afecolombia.org/>

Mexico

Centro Mexicano para la Filantropía
<https://www.cemefi.org/>

Oceania

Australia

Philanthropy Australia: Philanthropy and COVID-19
<https://www.philanthropy.org.au/tools-resources/philanthropy-and-covid-19/>

New Zealand

Philanthropy New Zealand: Covid-19 Implications on Philanthropic Funding and Grantmaking
<https://philanthropy.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Covid-19-implications-on-philanthropic-funding-and-grantmaking-Survey-findings.pdf>

Other resources (non-country specific)

Arts & Culture

Inside Philanthropy
<https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/arts-culture>

Education

EdFunders
<https://www.edfunders.org/resources/covid-19-education-philanthropy-resources>

Environment

<https://www.wwf.eu/>

Healthcare

Grantmakers in Health (GIH)
<https://www.gih.org/health-philanthropy-issues/covid-19/>

Technology

The Coronavirus Tech Primer
<https://coronavirustechprimer.com/>

Tech Impact

<https://techimpact.org/>

This list is just a starting point. Many other valuable resources are live online or being posted every week.

5 – Sample letters to grantees

Example 1: Fondation Philanthropia, Switzerland

A message of support to the grantees of Fondation Philanthropia

Dear Partner,

The coronavirus crisis is still getting worse every day, and we need solidarity, compassion, and determination to face and overcome it. The pandemic poses many different types of challenges: health-related, of course, but also economic and logistical, with the latter two hitting non-profit organisations particularly hard.

When we entered into a partnership with your organisation, we created a relationship of trust and support. In this trying time, such relationships are more important than ever. That is why we want to do what we can to help you weather the storm, continue to provide your much needed services during this crisis, and remain solid and healthy at the organisational level in the aftermath.

In order to offer you practical and concrete assistance in the immediate term, the Board of Fondation Philanthropia has decided to take the following steps:

1. If the coronavirus forces you to change or cancel the project(s) that we are supporting, we are and remain available to discuss the possibility of removing or changing agreed-upon earmarks or funding allocations.
2. We understand that the crisis may lead you to request changes to the agreed-upon payment schedule, and we are open to discussing any such requests.
3. In order to better understand the specific challenges that you are facing, we would like to schedule a phone call with you, ideally before Easter. We would therefore request that you respond to this letter with some possible half-hour time slots.

We thank you for your work and the efforts that you are undertaking for the greater good. We wish you success and the best of luck, and we will do our best to help you overcome this crisis.

With our warmest regards,

Example 2: Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, UK²⁶

March 2020

COVID-19: A message of support for those we fund

We want to reassure all those we fund that we will stand with you during this exceptional time. We want to support you as you seek to continue or adapt your vital work.

We can confirm that all those who currently have a grant agreement with us will continue to receive payments as specified in your letter of offer. We understand that the impacts of COVID-19 mean that you may not be able to deliver the activities, outputs or outcomes originally agreed.

We encourage those organisations with core or unrestricted grants to use the flexibility that comes with this funding to help you deal with the challenges you face.

For those organisations with project grants, please contact your grants officer if you would like to discuss significant changes to your planned work and expenditure.

We are open to changing reporting requirements for those that require this, and are currently considering other ways in which we can adapt our grant-making practice to support you. We will provide an update on this in due course.

We know you will be busy with contingency planning for your own organisations. We are here if you want to talk to us but will wait for you to contact us when the time is right for you.

JRCT has signed up to a joint statement coordinated by London Funders. The statement can be viewed here: <https://londonfunders.org.uk/about/covid-19>.

²⁶ Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. 2020. “COVID-19: A message of support for those we fund.” Accessed on 10 July 2020 at <https://www.jrct.org.uk/message-of-support>.

Example 3: Ford Foundation, United States²⁷

A message of support for our grantees

Hilary Pennington, Executive Vice President of Programs

16 March 2020

Dear Colleagues,

As the implications of COVID-19 unfold, we know that the shocks of this “new normal” are severe and unanticipated for you—our grantee partners—as indeed they are for us all, professionally and personally. We are acutely aware that this global crisis will manifest differently in different contexts and therefore requires a lot of customization in our responses.

To that end, we want to provide you with maximum flexibility in how you use our funds in this time of extraordinary challenge. We know that “one size will not fit all,” so our program officers plan to reach out to you individually to work on the best ways in which we can support you. The purpose of this communication is to share our general policies so that you will have them in advance of those conversations. We don’t have all the answers, but we are learning as we go and continuing to adapt our responses.

Our funding policies are designed to weather crises

During Darren’s tenure, the Ford Foundation has put in place financial policies that are intended for a time like this. Our goal is to provide as much flexibility, certainty, and stability for grantee partners as possible, despite a time of turmoil in financial markets. We have four primary ways of doing this:

1. **First**, the foundation’s primary grant-making modality is now general operating support. We have moved our total annual grant-making from 25 percent to 71 percent GOS over the last four years. We also doubled the overhead allocation for project grants from 10 percent to 20 percent, and even more when a compelling case is made.
2. **Second**, we take a balanced approach to investing and protecting our endowment, reducing risk and providing a potential cushion for economic downturns. In 2015, we changed our budgetary policies to apply a three-year rolling average of the endowment value to determine our spending each year. In doing so, we insulate our grantees because the foundation’s spending does not fall off a financial cliff.
3. **Third**, we have adopted multiyear budgets for each of our program teams to enable more funding certainty for grantees.
4. **Fourth**, we work hard to manage Ford’s own operational costs in order to maximize the resources available for grants.

²⁷ Ford Foundation. 2020. “A message of support for our grantees.” Accessed on 10 July 2020 at <https://www.fordfoundation.org/ideas/equal-change-blog/posts/a-message-of-support-for-our-grantees/>.

Providing flexibility in the near term

We recognize that the kind of flexibility you need may include postponing or canceling convenings or other activities that our grant is supporting; delaying grant deliverables because activities aren't able to continue as planned; or delaying submission of proposals or reports. In consultation with your program officer, we are willing to formalize changes to your grant agreement as well, specifically:

- **For grantee partners receiving project support, we are open to converting your current project grants to general support** so that you have maximum flexibility to respond to COVID-19. If this is something that would be helpful to you, please let your program officer know. *This applies to all grantees other than expenditure responsibility grantees, universities, fiscal sponsors, and governmental units; if you fall into one of those categories, you should speak to your program officer directly and there may be other ways we can provide you with more flexibility.*
- **We are open to changing the payment schedule for your grant if that would be helpful to you.** Again, please let your program officer know if there are adjustments we can make.
- **Grant funds will not be rescinded if a program, conference, or other grant activity is canceled or postponed due to COVID-19.** We understand you have sunk costs and will work with you to repurpose any remaining grant funds for other activities.

Collective advocacy for broader policy change

- In the US and beyond, as appropriate, we should seize the opportunities presented by this crisis to advocate for the kinds of policy changes that will help the populations who will be hardest hit by the coronavirus emergency. Together, we can use our platforms to advocate for these kinds of policies. In many cases, these are policies you advocate for generally—reduced carbon footprint, paid sick leave, expanded access to health insurance, customized support for people with disabilities, expanded unemployment insurance, food aid, rental assistance and mortgage forbearance, student debt relief, and more. Your program officers will be interested to hear what you are doing and what you would find helpful in this regard.

As we talk with you over the coming days and months, we will take what we learn and do our best to adapt to your evolving needs. We are very aware of the challenges to morale, organizational culture, and productivity that many of our organizations will be facing. We are committed to being good partners and a source of meaningful support for you.

Thank you for all you are doing in these hard circumstances to keep moving your essential work forward. It matters now more than ever, and we are so grateful to each of you for all you do.

With gratitude,

Hilary Pennington
Executive Vice President of Programs
Ford Foundation

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