A Community Responds
THE BOSTON FOUNDATION AND THE COVID CRISIS
OUR MISSION

As Greater Boston’s community foundation, the Boston Foundation devotes its resources to building and sustaining a vital, prosperous city and region, where justice and opportunity are extended to everyone. It fulfills this mission in three principal ways:

- Making grants to nonprofit organizations and designing special funding initiatives to address this community’s critical challenges;

- Working in partnership with donors to achieve high-impact philanthropy; and

- Serving as a civic hub and center of information, where ideas are shared, levers for change are identified, and common agendas for the future are developed.

ABOUT THE BOSTON FOUNDATION

The Boston Foundation, Greater Boston’s community foundation, brings people and resources together to solve Boston’s big problems. Established in 1915, it is one of the largest community foundations in the nation. The Foundation works in close partnership with its donors, with more than 1,000 separate charitable funds established for the general benefit for the community, as Donor Advised Funds or for special purposes. It also works to harness Greater Boston’s collective power with the goal of improving our city and region. It does this by acting as a civic leader, think tank and advocacy organization, commissioning research into the most critical issues of our time and influencing public policy designed to advance opportunity for everyone.

OUR VALUES STATEMENT

In everything we do, we seek to broaden participation, foster collaboration and heal racial, ethnic and community divisions.
A COMMUNITY RESPONDS

On March 13, 2020, the Boston Foundation launched the COVID-19 Response Fund, the first major fund established in New England to address pandemic-driven needs. The announcement took place just days after Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker announced the first school and business closings.

The Foundation seeded the new fund with $250,000 from its own endowment, the Permanent Fund for Boston. In short order and with remarkable speed and generosity, numerous donors—individuals, families, companies and other foundations—began contributing on all levels. The largest contribution was $750,000 from a corporate giving program. The smallest was $24, the proceeds from a lemonade stand.

The Foundation also served as one of the fiscal sponsors for the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund launched by First Lady Lauren Baker and Joanna Jacobson, President of the One8 Foundation, which raised and distributed more than $30 million. And the Foundation played a central role in setting up the Business Equity COVID-19 Emergency Fund to provide loans, grants and other support for businesses owned by people of color.

In addition to its own grantmaking, the Foundation supports hundreds of donors who conduct their philanthropy through Donor Advised Funds at the Foundation—and those donors responded as never before. At least $43 million went from Boston Foundation Donor Advised Funds to COVID-related efforts in Greater Boston and across the country.

And during the chaotic rush to secure Personal Protective Equipment for frontline workers, the Foundation worked with entrepreneur Jeff Bussgang and a group of Harvard Business School students to set up a COVID-19 PPE Fund that secured millions of dollars in lifesaving equipment for Boston area hospitals.

COVID-19 Response Fund
tbf.org/covid

$15 MILLION contributions received
36 donors gave $100,000 or more
650 donors gave $250 or less
1,300 unique gifts

A DIVERSE AND EARLY RESPONSE

We extend our deepest thanks to the individuals, families, students, foundations and companies who responded to the call for contributions when we announced the COVID-19 Response Fund in March of 2020. It was a time for our community to come together as never before and that’s exactly what happened.
A RAPID RESPONSE TO MEET EMERGENCY NEEDS

In the earliest days of the COVID crisis, everyone in Greater Boston was reminded that we are living in a profoundly unequal society. It became clear that a disproportionate number of those who were infected and dying were low-income people of color. In many cases, they were the same people who couldn’t work remotely because, although they are often underpaid and lacking benefits, they are crucial to our ability to function as a society.

Within weeks of establishing the Fund, grants began going out to those nonprofit organizations that work closely with Greater Boston’s most marginalized individuals and families. The application and review process was streamlined to facilitate quick approval for desperately needed funding.

Basic needs were the focus and still are: food, sanitizers, diapers and other essentials for young families. The funded nonprofits included those serving the elderly, immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, people with disabilities, homeless youth, those trapped in abusive relationships and others who were hit particularly hard by the crisis.

PHASE I: EMERGENCY GRANTS

In the first six months alone, $8 million in grants went out to 260 nonprofits, 60% of which were led by and served people of color and 59% of which were located outside the City of Boston. The average grant size was $25,000.

57,146 individuals assisted

14,000 families assisted

83,000 meals served

A TBF Donor Advised Fund co-managed by Rob and Jennifer Waldron distributed $1 million in rapid response grants to help children impacted by school closings.

Harvard Business School student Sophie Bai and professor Jeff Bussgang opened a Donor Advised Fund at TBF and raised $3.5 million for 1.9 million pieces of PPE for health care workers.

The Latino Equity Fund, formerly the Latino Legacy Fund, provided $263,500 in COVID-related grants to support Latinx families hit hard by the crisis.

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A JUST AND EQUITABLE RECOVERY

Following six rounds of emergency grants to hundreds of nonprofits working on the ground to provide emergency relief, the Boston Foundation turned its attention to making a series of investments in nonprofits that are not only continuing to meet the need for emergency supplies but are taking on the inequities exacerbated by the pandemic.

Data from our own research center, Boston Indicators, and other research partners show that the virus is hitting communities of color particularly hard. High COVID caseloads correlate with higher shares of residents of color, lower-income and non-English speaking households—and a very large percentage of workers on the frontlines: those we have taken to calling “essential workers.”

COVID is magnifying the shameful inequities that have been baked into our society for decades. These organizations and their dynamic leaders are taking the long view and are committed to deep, structural change. Through the COVID-19 Response Fund, we are proud to support their ongoing work. In addition, funding is going to a series of new collaborations designed to support housing affordability in Greater Boston, community-led development in the City of Chelsea and efforts that center on the arts as a lever for economic empowerment for communities of color.

LIFTING UP PIONEERING LEADERS

Many of the organizations funded during the recovery phase of the COVID-19 Response Fund are run by dynamic leaders who are focused not only on relief, but on fighting systemic racism and creating opportunity for all members of our community.

Gladys Vega, who leads La Colaborativa in Chelsea, has gained national recognition for the relief work she directs—and is also focused on empowering Chelsea’s residents, especially Latinx immigrants who are seeking a better life in the U.S.

Segun Odowu heads up the Black Economic Council of Massachusetts, which was formed in response to a Federal Reserve Bank of Boston report, which showed that the median wealth of White families is $247,000, compared to $8 for Black households.

Monica Cannon-Grant founded Violence in Boston, a nonprofit that works to improve the quality of life and life outcomes of individuals from disenfranchised communities by reducing violence and the trauma of its impact.

PHASE II: RECOVERY GRANTS

Beginning in December of 2020, the Foundation began awarding major grants to ensure a just and equitable recovery—using data to identify the communities that have suffered disproportionately during the pandemic.

70% of grantees led by and serving people of color

$150,000 average grant size
WEBINARS SINCE MARCH 2020

Advancing Racial Equity Through Organizational Change

COVID Community Data Lab Launch

Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in Boston

Greater Boston Housing Report Card Webinar #1: Housing Stability During COVID and Beyond

Green Space, White Space: Racial Equity and Public Places

Race and Voucher Discrimination in Greater Boston

Greater Boston Housing Report Card Webinar #2: Racial Equity in Housing in the COVID-19 Era

A Guaranteed Income for Massachusetts

Greater Boston Housing Report Card Webinar #3: Housing Equity and Resilience in Greater Boston’s Post-COVID Economy

Reforming Philanthropy with an Equity Lens

Opportunity, Justice and Philanthropy: A Conversation with the Obama Foundation

The State of Hunger: Before and Since the Pandemic

Addressing Inequities in Maternal Health: A Spotlight on Greater Boston

Live Arts Boston: Creativity, Entrepreneurship & Equity in the Performing Arts

The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in Massachusetts: A Race to Lead Brief

The Impact of COVID on Greater Boston’s Asian Community


Impact of COVID-19 on Child Care in Boston

THE ADDED POWER OF CIVIC LEADERSHIP

Information is power, especially if it is timely and widely accessible, so that it can be interpreted and contribute to making crucial decisions about the allocation of resources and energy.

Within weeks of the onset of the COVID crisis, the Boston Foundation’s research group, Boston Indicators, began work on the COVID Community Data Lab, which was unveiled at a webinar in May. The dynamic website was developed in collaboration with other researchers and continuously updates a combination of metrics tracing ways in which this unparalleled public health crisis is playing out across Greater Boston.

In addition to our grantmaking, the Boston Foundation serves as a center for data that is used to inform decisions through the nonprofit and public sectors. In normal times, fresh, timely data is released at a series of live forums at the Foundation’s headquarters, but when COVID hit, all forums were quickly reconfigured as a series of webinars, which allows hundreds more people to participate.

Interactive conversations were held on the effects of COVID and on the economic and social conditions affecting people of color.

6,500 participants joined 18 webinars on COVID and equity since March 2020

9 reports released on COVID and issues of equity
PARTNERING WITH THE BOSTON FOUNDATION

Thougtful, effective philanthropy is more important today than at any time in the Boston Foundation’s 105-year history. We work in close partnership with our donors—generous individuals, families, companies and entrepreneurs, all deeply committed to the community of Greater Boston and the world beyond. They seek a platform for their charitable giving because, like them, we measure philanthropy by impact created, not just dollars given.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO PARTNER WITH US

Support systemic change through civic leadership

●

Work with us to shape your legacy

●

Streamline your personal or corporate giving through a Donor Advised Fund

●

Give locally, nationally and internationally

●

Maximize your giving with The Philanthropic Initiative

For more information about becoming a donor by opening a Donor Advised Fund, contributing to our Annual Campaign for Civic Leadership or making a planned or legacy gift, contact us at 617-338-2213 or donorservices@tbf.org.
BOSTON FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP

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