

COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE GRANTS

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has forced widespread school closures in the United States and an unprecedented disruption of PreK-16 teaching and learning. In the blink of an eye, policy makers and public school educators and administrators made tough decisions to halt in-person instruction and transition to virtual lessons and classrooms. When schools in any district are forced to close, many students lose access not only to academic and social and emotional learning opportunities, but also to food, safe spaces and regular interactions with peers and caring adults that make up their school community. Meanwhile, educators are not only facing the public health crisis, but navigating personal and caretaking responsibilities at home as well new work environments and expectations.

The rapid transition to virtual instruction and learning also has illuminated educational inequities, especially those faced by students living in poverty or lacking stable housing, students with special needs, foster youth, English-language learners and other vulnerable children. Fortunately, as always, educators are going above and beyond to meet student needs, and various groups are providing funding and other resources directly to educators, community groups and families.

This fact sheet consists of suggested resources for NEA State Affiliates and members about funding opportunities, addressing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning.

NEA FOUNDATION GRANTS

The NEA Foundation (www.neafoundation.org) has created three new COVID-19 response funding opportunities exclusively for NEA members. A full description of these awards, including related criteria, guidelines and timelines, can be found at <https://www.neafoundation.org/for-educators/covid-rapid-response-grants/>, and staff are available to answer questions (contact Meghan Berka, mberka@nea.org).

1. **COVID-19 Rapid Response Grants** (*to be awarded summer 2020*) will support educator-led initiatives to adapt to the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, these \$1,500 to \$5,000 six-month grant opportunities will help educators to address contributors to educational inequity and educational opportunity gaps. Applicants requesting this funding should be prepared to begin their projects during the summer 2020. **Deadline to apply: June 11, 2020.**
2. **COVID-19 Response - Learning & Leadership Grants** (*to be awarded in September 2020*) will support educators' professional development focused on adapting to the unique challenges of the 2020-2021 school year. Applications submitted for one-year grants of either \$2,000 or \$5,000 should particularly address how the applicant(s) would use grant funds to prepare themselves, their colleagues, their students, or school community to respond to the increased educational equity and opportunity challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. **Deadline to apply: July 15, 2020.**

3. **COVID-19 Response - Student Success Grants** (*to be awarded in September 2020*) will support educator-led initiatives that increase educational equity and opportunity, responding to student needs that emerged or intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Grants in amounts of either \$2,000 or \$5,000 will be awarded for a one-year period. Applicants requesting this funding should be prepared to implement their projects during the 2020-2021 school year. **Deadline to apply: July 15, 2020.**

OTHER FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

According to Grantmakers for Education, hundreds of COVID-19 rapid response funds have been established in the U.S., suggesting a generous response from the philanthropic community.¹ Many of these funds are place-based, meaning specific to a local community. If your association already receives support from philanthropy, know that many funders are offering their grantees no-penalty extensions, earlier payments and/or the opportunity to convert funds formerly restricted to a particular program area to general operating support or to support a COVID-19 response. Talk to your funders about this flexibility.

For organizations or schools just beginning to look for funding to support public education, check out:

1. Your local **“public education fund”** or **“foundation for public schools”** (Google these words.). These typically are nonprofit groups that raise funds to enhance the quality of *public* education and bolster the most strategic or pressing needs of a specific school district(s). Around the country, these groups are working with education leaders and other partners to meet needs of students and families impacted by Coronavirus and fill gaps as they are identified.
2. **Community foundations** are dedicated to improving the lives of people in a defined local geographic area. Community foundations typically seek support from the general public and provide grants from funds they maintain and administer on behalf of multiple donors. Find community foundations in your region here: <https://www.cof.org/community-foundation-locator>.
3. The **United Way** is present in nearly 1,800 communities worldwide. It focuses on creating community-based and community-led solutions that strengthen the quality of life, normally with emphases on *education, financial stability* and *health*. Find a local United Way here: <https://www.unitedway.org/find-your-united-way>.
4. **Candid.** [2020]. *Funds for Coronavirus Relief*. Retrieved May 28, 2020 from <https://candid.org/explore-issues/coronavirus/funds>.
5. **Giving Compass and National Center for Family Philanthropy.** [2020]. *Coronavirus & COVID-19 Response and Relief Funds*. Retrieved May 28, 2020 from <https://givingcompass.org/coronavirus-covid19>.

GENERAL GRANTSEEKING TIPS

- Read through the entire application and instructions before you start to write a proposal.
- Don't be afraid to contact the funder to ask for clarifying information or feedback on your idea.
- Try to clearly connect your goals and approach to the needs you define.

¹ Grantmakers for Education. (2020). *Education Grantmaking During COVID-19: Early Trends*. Retrieved from https://www.edfunders.org/sites/default/files/Education_Grantmaking_During_COVID-19_Early_Trends.pdf

- As best as possible, try to explain a specific plan and connects the steps in that plan to the budget line-items requested. Concise but informative details will help grant reviewers to understand your thought process and how you will use grant funds to achieve your goals.
- Pay attention to dates, especially how much time may pass before you can expect to receive a decision on your grant application.
- Don't be intimidated. You are an expert on the communities and populations you serve!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ASSOCIATION LEADERS NAVIGATING COVID-19

- **American Society of Association Executives:** <https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/roundup/issue-roundup-coronavirus>
- **National Council of Nonprofits:** <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/nonprofits-and-coronavirus-covid-19>. Find your state nonprofit association here: <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/find-your-state-association>