

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: EMERGENCY RECOVERY FUND FOR COVID-19



United Way
of Whatcom County

What is the United Way of Whatcom County Emergency Recovery Fund?

The needs in our community are changing frequently as a result of the COVID-19 virus. To remain flexible to those changing needs, United Way quickly made the decision to invest \$135,000 into an emergency fund to provide immediate support to local nonprofits whose services were identified as providing crucial food, housing, medical and mental health services, and childcare for essential workers and first responders. The demand for these services is immediate and increasing. Our local nonprofits are stepping up to do these things in the most incredible ways, but they need help and resources to do it.

The Emergency Recovery Fund is separate from, and in addition to, the Community Impact Fund that supports so many nonprofits all year long. These dollars will go directly to agencies on the front lines of this crisis so that they can continue to provide critical systems and programs to help stabilize vulnerable populations and mitigate long term effects on our community.

We are seeking help from our corporate partners and the community to help build this fund. The more we raise, [the more people we can help](#).

How can I contribute to United Way's Emergency Recovery Fund?

Giving online is fast and easy. Here's the link:

[United Way Emergency Recovery Fund for COVID-19](#)

If you want to send your donation directly to our office, that works also. Please note: Mail delivery and pick up may be slightly delayed as our team works remotely.

United Way of Whatcom County
1500 Cornwall Ave. #203
Bellingham, WA 98225

Please email hello@UnitedWayWhatcom.org with any additional donation questions.

Is my gift tax deductible?

Yes. As of March 27th 2020, the CARES Act for Nonprofits was signed into law (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act). This \$2 trillion economic stimulus package provided immediate relief for nonprofits, businesses, individuals and state and local governments, including charitable giving incentives.

Here's a quick summary:

The CARES act created an above-the-line deduction (universal or non-itemized deduction that applies to all taxpayers) for total charitable contributions of up to \$300. The incentive applies to

cash contributions made in 2020 and can be claimed on tax forms next year. The law also lifts the existing cap on annual contributions for those who itemize, raising it from 60 percent of adjusted gross income to 100 percent. For corporations, the law raises the annual limit from 10 percent to 25 percent. Food donations from corporations would be available to 25 percent, up from the current 15 percent cap.

For more information, [click here](#).

Are there other funds out there?

Yes. Our partners at the [Whatcom Center for Philanthropy](#) have also established response and relief funds, and we are all working closely to make sure every dollar is being used effectively to make the biggest impact. Grant requests are sent through a single point of contact and each request is evaluated collectively. So while each organization is focusing on specific vulnerable populations and aspects of the community, we all want to make sure that donated dollars are helping where they are most needed.

United Way's fund is focused on basic needs and financial stability. We know that 2 in 5 households in Whatcom County have trouble making ends meet-- and that was before COVID-19. Help with food, housing, and childcare are desperately needed in addition to medical and mental health services. This is where our Emergency Recovery Fund dollars are being invested.

Are you granting funds to individuals?

There are so many people who need help right now. Grants from this fund will support the critical systems and nonprofits that are able to scale up and serve large numbers of individuals and families throughout Whatcom County. By providing additional funding to nonprofit agencies, we are able to address community needs on a larger scale and serve more community members during this crisis.

How can I find out who the Emergency Recovery Fund is supporting?

We keep an updated list of Emergency Recovery Fund grants on our blog: [How United Way Is Helping During COVID-19](#)

Will United Way still be providing grants to local organizations through the Community Impact Fund?

Yes. We are continuing to grant funds to our partner agencies with the money raised from our generous local companies, donors and advocates. Our fundraising efforts for both funds will continue as long as our community needs us.

If you work for an organization that supports United Way, our employee giving efforts may look a bit different this year. We might not be able to hold our signature kickoff event in September or visit your locations in person. This makes us a little bit sad, because seeing your faces, attending your events, and sharing our collective LIVE UNITED spirit is truly the highlight of our year. But rest assured, we will be in touch with inspiration, stories, and updates, including information about community resources for those in need and ways to give for those who want to help.

How does the Community Impact Fund differ from the Emergency Recovery Fund? Can I switch my donation from one to the other?

This COVID-19 fund is separate from, and in addition to, the donations that come from our annual fundraising campaign. Unfortunately, we can't transfer donations from one fund to the other. The funds are set up differently and intended for specific types of support.

- The Emergency Recovery Fund was established to provide extra resources in the moment to United Way partner agencies experiencing increased demand for critical food, housing, and healthcare services as a result of COVID-19. United Way of Whatcom County has contributed \$135,000 into this fund and is seeking support from those who would like to give to this effort specifically.
- The Community Impact Fund supports these same vital agencies month after month, to help them keep their programs running and their services available for those who need them most. These dollars come from donations and pledges made during the campaign season.

Our nonprofit partners need extra support right now to weather this crisis, but they will also need long term support to keep their doors open and help our community recover. The COVID-19 fund provides the much needed short term help and the Community Impact Fund provides the equally important long term support. Donors can feel good that we are committed to providing both.

I made a contribution during my workplace campaign. Does that mean those dollars went into the Emergency Recovery Fund?

Unless your workplace is running a special ask for COVID-19 funds, your United Way donations will go to the Community Impact Fund that supports our nonprofit partners over the course of the year. Our agencies rely on this consistent funding to be able to provide their services and keep their doors open over the long term.

Will United Way be visiting my workplace in the fall of 2020? Will those dollars go to the Recovery Fund?

At this time, we don't know what the fall fundraising campaign will look like. We can think of nothing sweeter than the idea of seeing your faces and feeling all that LIVE UNITED energy in one room. If we're allowed to gather, we will host our kickoff on at the Ferry Terminal Thursday, September 3rd and would love to visit your workplaces to update you on the amazing work you help make happen. If this new normal of social distancing continues, we'll have to get creative. You may see more virtual meetings or online campaigns. Of course we will do our best to keep you informed and engaged at all points along the way.

It will take our community a long time to recover from the effects of COVID-19. That said, we anticipate that our focus will be primarily on providing long-term sustainability for critical agencies through the Community Impact Fund. Stay tuned for more details and thank you for Living United!