



CNC Recommendations for Community Benefits COVID-19 Funds

The proposed CNC recommendations below are attempting to respond to the following realities, based on the data we have collected through the two nonprofit sector surveys that CNC has conducted since the pandemic struck:

- **There is widespread and urgent need:** Nonprofit organizations across the city have an immediate and critical need for financial support, in order to address the immediate and critical community needs.
- **Nonprofits are facing capacity challenges:** Nonprofit staff are already stretched thin adapting to the current reality, and addressing the drastic increases in community need.
- **Nonprofits are facing cash flow and financial challenges:** Many nonprofits are struggling with immediate cash flow shortages, major reductions in income, and no or very limited cash reserves.

Recommendation Summary: On May 18, 2020, the City of Cambridge made a \$1 million appropriation from the Community Benefits fund to support nonprofits working with vulnerable populations impacted by COVID-19. CNC extends our gratitude that this funding is being made available to specifically support nonprofits as they adjust to the new realities that the COVID-19 pandemic has created, and to bolster our ability to provide the critical support our community needs at this time. Our intent with these recommendations is to ensure this funding is distributed with an urgency that matches the need, and done in a way that is impactful and reduces barriers to accessing these funds.

CNC Recommendations:

Funding Approach:

- Make 100 grants available at \$10K each
- Administer funds through grant agreements rather than reimbursement contracts

- Allow proposals that address any of the needs listed on the 2017 Community Needs Assessment, rather than just the top tier
- Allow organizations to define their approach to addressing the broad impact of COVID-19 on the consumers and community they serve, and the ability of their organizations to operate.

Rationale: This level of funding will support a significant portion of nonprofits in the city, at a reasonable funding level. A reimbursement model presents a major barrier to many organizations that are facing immediate cash flow shortages. Many organizations don't currently have adequate cash on hand, and a reimbursement model would deter them from applying for and accessing these funds. Alternatively, grants provide organizations with the cash up-front so they can immediately resource the proposed services. The pandemic has created many new and unanticipated challenges for Cambridge residents. Many of the needs that were described as Tier 2 or 3 in the 2017 report may now be urgent. These changes in community need have in turn prompted many different types of nonprofits to shift programming in order to address those needs in new ways. We trust that nonprofits will see and respond to the most pressing needs in their communities, in a way that is best aligned with their organizational strengths.

Application Process:

- Create an extremely simple and streamlined application and reporting process. We recommend that the committee create a short eligibility checklist, and in addition request only a 1-2 paragraph project summary and simple budget. The checklist would allow organizations to establish their 501(c)3 status, and that the proposal is addressing one of the needs from the Needs Assessment, will benefit Cambridge residents, and addresses needs that are a result of, or have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rationale: Nonprofit staff are already working to their fullest capacities to address the needs in our community and adapt to the added challenges that the pandemic has created. The application process for this funding should not be burdensome, knowing that many organizations do not have the staff capacity for lengthy and complex grant applications. Utilizing a checklist approach will also allow for a very quick turn-around because applications will not have to be as carefully evaluated and ranked.

Timeline:

- Create a timeline that will allow funds to be distributed the week of July 1st. The process should match the urgency of need.

- Provide funding to the first 100 organizations that meet the eligibility requirements and submit a complete application.

Rationale: Many organizations were able to obtain short term, emergency cash from PPP loans or other sources of support. PPP funds in particular must be spent within the 8 weeks immediately following the receipt of the loan in order to be eligible for forgiveness.

Organizations that were relying on this funding to retain staff and maintain operations will be running out of cash soon (end of June 2020 for those that secured a loan in the second round). Immediate funding will be imperative to avoid lay-offs and closures, which will further hinder organizations trying to respond to this crisis now and during the recovery period. Funding on a first-come, first-served basis will allow for a quick and equitable process for the approval of proposals, and we commit to conducting intensive, targeted outreach prior to the application window in order to ensure that this approach does not disadvantage any applicants . Creating a process that requires evaluation and ranking of proposals will inevitably be slower and make a July 1st disbursement challenging.

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