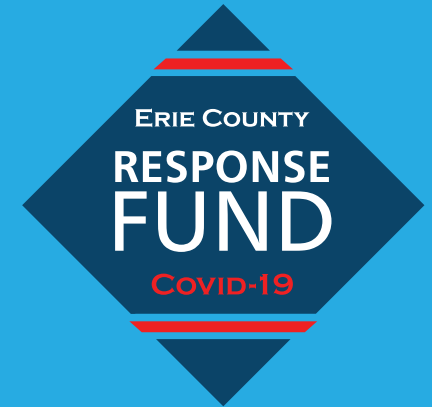


# NOTES ON THE CRISIS



## A REPORT on the ERIE COUNTY COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND

As the COVID-19 crisis wreaked havoc on communities and small businesses across the country, ECGRA was recognized by Drexel University Nowak Metro Finance Lab as a “First Mover” in the nation. Erie County’s swift response was profiled as a model public-entity fund to reduce the impact of the enormous economic tsunami at hand. This report is a snapshot of the timeline and organizations that benefitted from the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund.

# The \$2.35 million

## Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund

### Three components

1. Immediate Human Relief
2. Nonprofit Loan Fund
3. Small Business Loan Fund

### **Announced on March 17th, 2020,**

just days after Pennsylvania public schools were closed and health officials ordered restaurants and small businesses closed as part of mitigation efforts, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) partnered with the Erie County Council to create a three-pronged relief program, the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund.

### **Leaders proactively created the Fund**

after witnessing news reports from larger cities chronicling the spread of the disease, its effects on the population of those cities, and resulting business closures. The Fund focused on small businesses, nonprofits, and humanitarian aid.

### **Designed to address the crisis**

each area of funding was created for multiple stakeholders from multiple perspectives.

**“American communities without a public agency like ECGRA, built to connect and invest at all levels of a community, are at a distinct disadvantage in a post-COVID world. ECGRA was built to move swiftly and with public accountability allowing Erie County to get ahead in the crisis, which saved many local organizations from closing their doors to the residents they serve.”**

**Bruce Katz**  
co-founder and inaugural director of the  
Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University

# **The COVID-19 pandemic arrived with very little warning.**

**Schools, businesses, and local government were shutting down.** ECGRA leadership pulled from experience and one helpful source early on: The Disaster Philanthropy Playbook, which can be found online at [www.disasterplaybook.org](http://www.disasterplaybook.org).

Serving as a framework for the Response Fund, the Immediate Human Relief components became a grant program for human services agencies on the frontlines of relief.

**The fund was launched as our community simultaneously faced the worst health and economic crisis of our time.** The COVID-19 global pandemic pushed local governments like counties, cities, and boroughs to their limits, with Erie County leaders earning strong reviews across the board.

Erie County Council utilized ECGRA's grantmaking expertise and infrastructure to create the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund. The Response Fund moved the needle and garnered national attention for Erie County.

**“In recent history, Erie County had not experienced a pandemic with the potential to kill so many people, cripple the county’s quality of life, and devastate the economy. ECGRA’s grantmaking infrastructure was the perfect vehicle to get ahead of the crushing humanitarian consequences of COVID-19.”**

**Dr. Perry Wood**  
Executive Director  
ECGRA

**\$708,794**

**IMMEDIATE  
HUMAN RELIEF  
FUND**

**2**

**NONPROFIT  
LOANS**

**24**

**SMALL  
BUSINESS  
LOANS**

# GRANT #1



\$168,000

Second Harvest  
Food Bank of NWPA

**PROJECT**

PURCHASE  
LIFE-SUSTAINING FOOD  
FOR ERIE COUNTY  
FAMILIES FACING FOOD  
INSECURITIES

## Second Harvest Food Bank

### Grants on the Ground ...Fast

The first grant awarded through the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund was swift and impactful. The grant to Second Harvest Food Bank supported 6,000 meals to be distributed throughout Erie County. The \$168,000 award launched the **Immediate Human Relief Fund effort**, providing grants that offered immediate relief to the populations served by food pantries, homeless shelters, child care centers, and elder care centers.

Anticipating that the Food Bank and pantry system would quickly run out of food, ECGRA reached out to the Second Harvest Food Bank and asked them to quantify the challenges that lie ahead. The first grant awarded supported 6,000 meals to be distributed to those in need throughout Erie County over two weeks. We connected their team with Meals on Wheels to work on home delivery to the homebound seniors. The swift action of Erie County Council and the ECGRA Board of Directors allowed for a solution in anticipation of a problem - not a lifeboat when the ship has already sunk.

In an effort to support increased need generated as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Second Harvest packed and distributed Emergency Relief Food Boxes through partners across Erie County. Each Emergency Food Relief Box, which provides 20 meals, costs \$28 to assemble and distribute.

An Emergency Fund grant awarded to Meals on Wheels helped support the cooperative relationship between the home meal delivery organization and Second Harvest Food Bank. Second Harvest Food Bank provided the Emergency Relief Boxes to Meals on Wheels Erie, utilizing funding previously awarded by ECGRA. Pantries and distribution entities that were not previously affiliated with Second Harvest were connected to harness the power of the grant.

The Erie County COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund's first and primary goal is to save lives by supporting those on the front lines of the COVID-19 battle. Grantmakers are uniquely positioned in a crisis because they are regularly in touch with nonprofit institutions that provide a range of lifesaving and -enhancing services. Rapid communication with the leaders in this sector led to an early conclusion: capital was not flowing, and therefore they could not help the people who depend on them.

“These are unprecedented times in which families are in desperate need of food. This crisis is affecting our entire community, and ECGRA quickly answered our call to purchase life sustaining food to help our neighbors.”

Karen S. Seggi  
Chief Executive Officer  
Erie Second Harvest Food Bank.

## Erie County Member Agencies Distributing Emergency Relief Food Boxes

Allegheny Health Network

Cathedral of St. Paul Food Pantry

Center City Apartments Food Pantry

Christian Cupboard Food Pantry

Church of the Nativity Food Pantry

Community of Caring Food Pantry

Community of Caring Diabetic Food Pantry

Edinboro Emergency Food Pantry

Ella Cochran Food Pantry

Emmaus Food Pantry

Erie City Mission Food Pantry

Fairview Presbyterian Food Pantry

Federated Church of East Springfield

Glenwood United Methodist Church Food Pantry

Henderson United Methodist Church Food Pantry

Kearsarge Area Food Pantry

New Beginnings Food Pantry

Northwestern Food Pantry

Sacred Heart Church Food Pantry

St. Boniface Church Food Pantry

St. George Food Pantry

St. James Food Pantry

St. Joseph Bread of Life

St. John Lutheran Church Food Pantry

St. Martin Center

Salvation Army

Sister Pascal Food Pantry

Sisters of Saint Joseph

Union City Food Pantry

Union City Full Gospel Church Food Pantry

Wesleyville Interfaith Food Pantry

*\* List as of 3/26/2020*

# March 20, 2020

## Business & Non-Profit Loan Fund

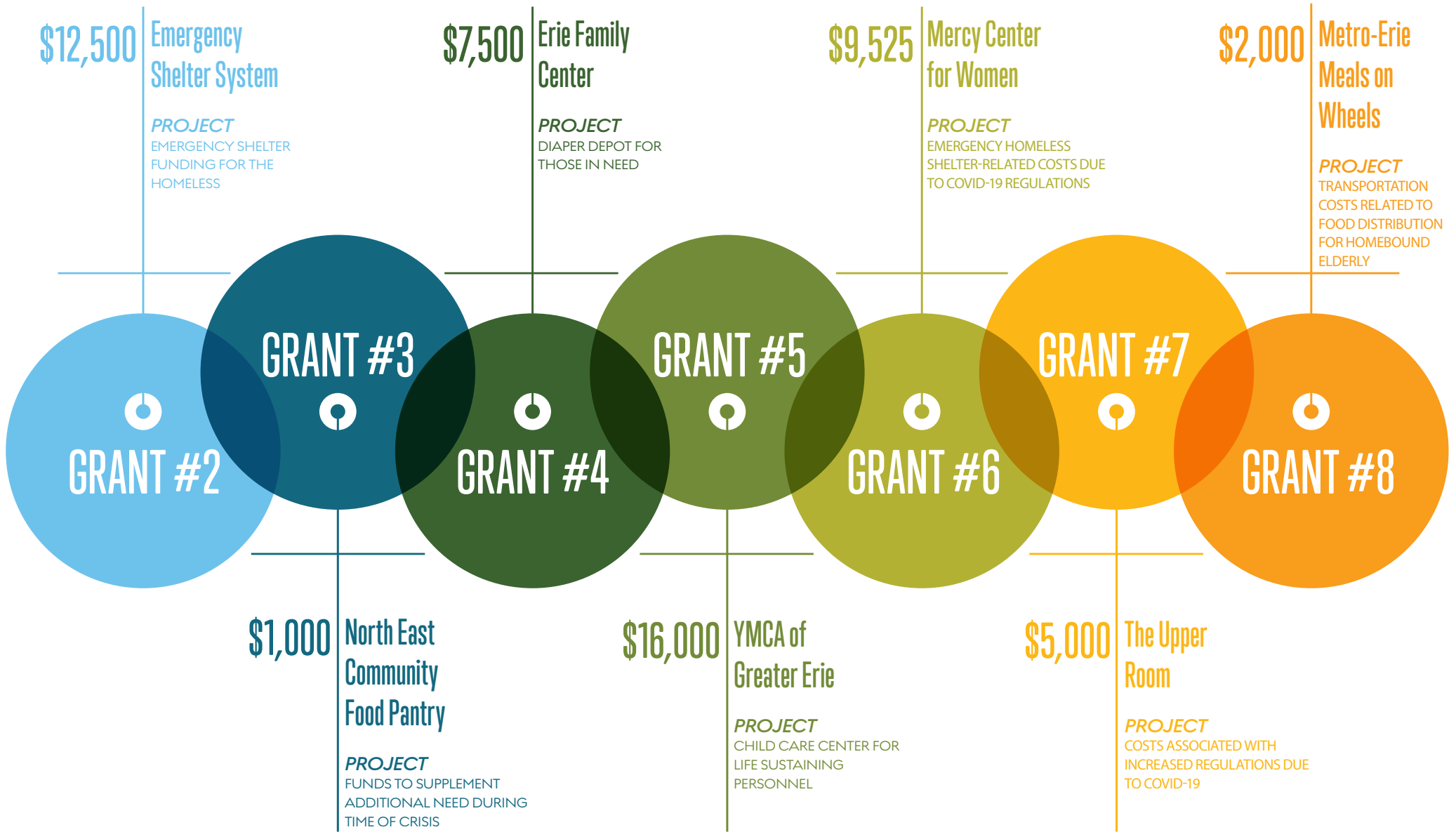
**COVID-19 Response Fund  
Activated to Sustain Erie  
County Small Businesses  
and Nonprofits**

The ECGRA-financed fund made patient, flexible loan capital available through Bridgeway Capital.

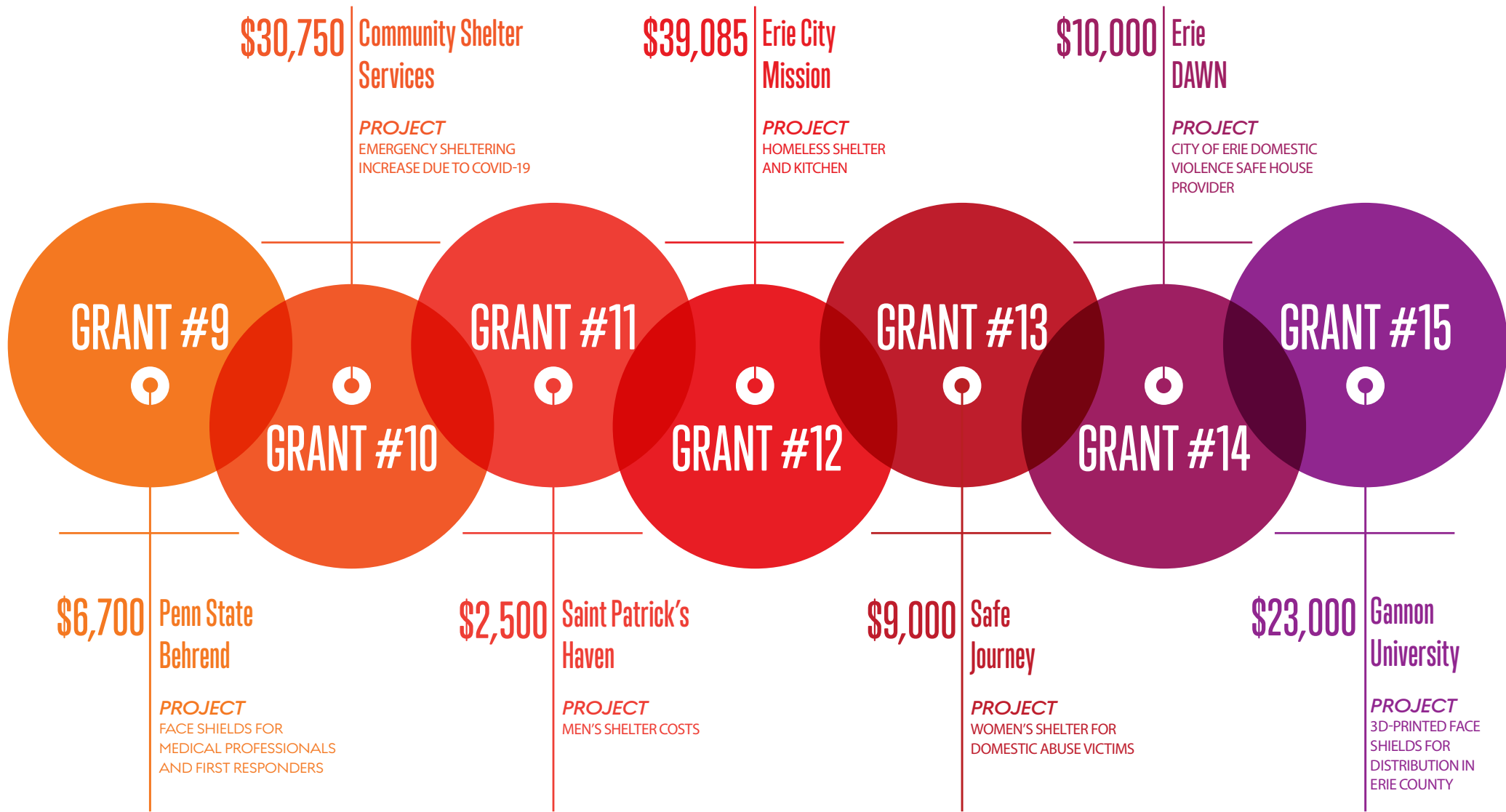
The **\$2.35 million Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund** included \$1.6 million of loans to small businesses and non-profits to help meet rapidly rising needs generated as a result of the COVID-19 public health crisis. The ECGRA loans were administered through Bridgeway Capital and included flexible payment schedules tailored to respond to the ever-evolving COVID-19 public health crisis. To help qualified small businesses and nonprofits access loan capital, Bridgeway opened the applications via an Erie County COVID-19 Business Relief webpage immediately and was able to close on **26 loans in just 7 weeks**.

**2** NONPROFIT LOANS

**24** SMALL BUSINESS LOANS







# GRANT #16



\$11,000

Sarah A. Reed  
Children's Center

**PROJECT**

TECHNOLOGY COSTS  
RELATED TO SOCIAL  
DISTANCING/REMOTE  
THERAPY

## Sarah A. Reed Children's Center

### Supporting Supportive Organizations

Sarah A. Reed Children's Center was awarded **\$11,000** through the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund to help continue their mission to improve the quality of life for children with mental health, emotional, behavioral health, and trauma-related challenges. When COVID-19 struck, Sarah Reed was serving 1,700 at-risk children and their families, including residents dependent on their life-supporting services.

The Residential Treatment Facility in Millcreek Township is Sarah Reed's most intensive program providing 24/7 housing, medical care, mental health counseling, daily meals, and educational support to 67 children ages 5-18 with significant psychiatric and/or trauma related challenges. Each child is monitored closely by the nursing staff at the on-campus Leslie Medical Center. When COVID-19 hit, they had to implement new safety measures to ensure that children and staff remained healthy.

The grant provided Sarah A. Reed Children's Center an opportunity to immediately purchase new safety equipment, which included infrared forehead thermometers, N95 masks, disposable face shields, and other personal protective equipment to keep all staff and children safe during the crisis. They were also able to obtain new air mattresses, sheets, pillows, blankets, and food equipment to prepare for their residential behavioral staff to shelter-in-place if needed with the children in the Gary Bukowski Sarah A. Reed Children's Center's five residence halls.

The pandemic also required therapists to provide mental health and behavioral counseling remotely. The grant provided 35 therapists with new Google Chromebooks and HIPAA-compliant Zoom licenses so they can continue to provide therapy to their clients remotely.

\$6,800

HVA Senior Living Alliance

PROJECT  
TECHNOLOGY COSTS  
RELATED TO TELEMEDICINE  
FOR SENIORS

\$7,300

St. Martin's Center

PROJECT  
CHILD CARE CENTER  
PREPARATION COSTS

\$3,850

MECA Senior Care

PROJECT  
SANITIZING THE  
SENIOR CENTER FOR  
FUTURE OPENING

\$25,400

Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network

PROJECT  
STAFF COSTS  
DUE TO LOST  
VOLUNTEER BASE

GRANT #18

GRANT #20

GRANT #22

GRANT #17

GRANT #19

GRANT #21

GRANT #23

\$2,365

Erie United Methodist Alliance

PROJECT  
HOMELESS SHELTER  
RELATED COSTS

\$7,600

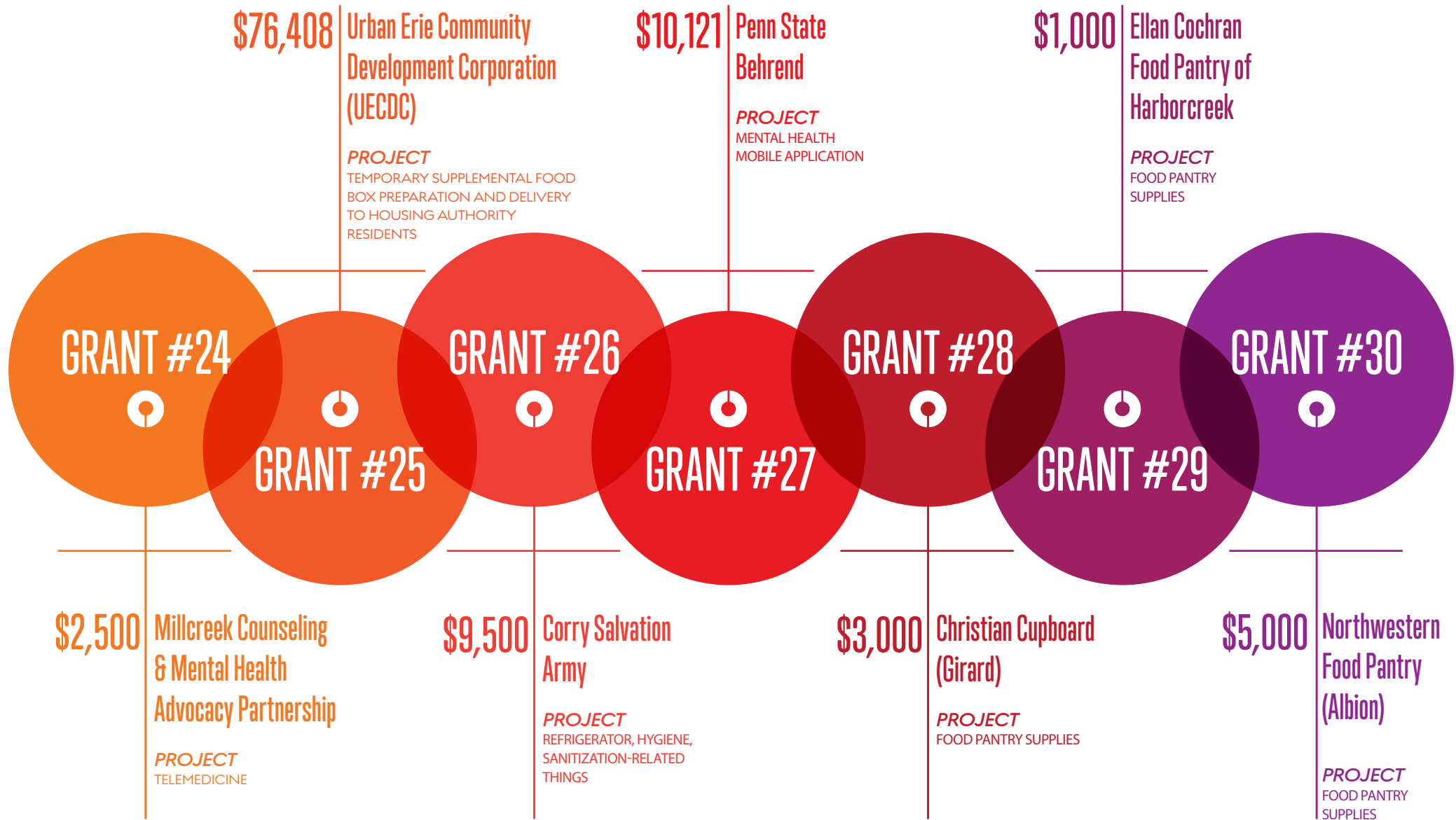
Bethany Outreach Center

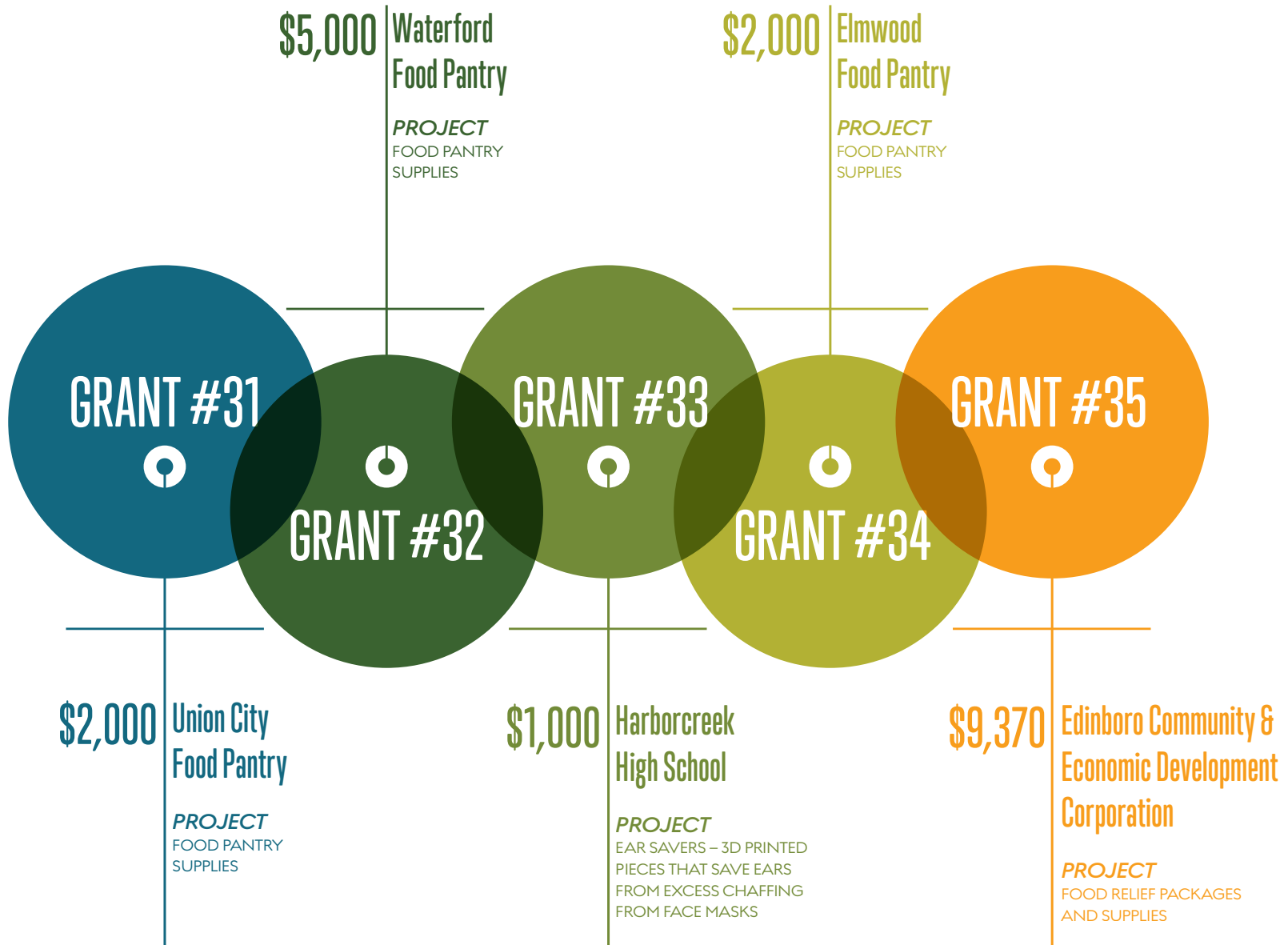
PROJECT  
EMERGENCY HYGIENE  
AND FOOD  
DISTRIBUTION

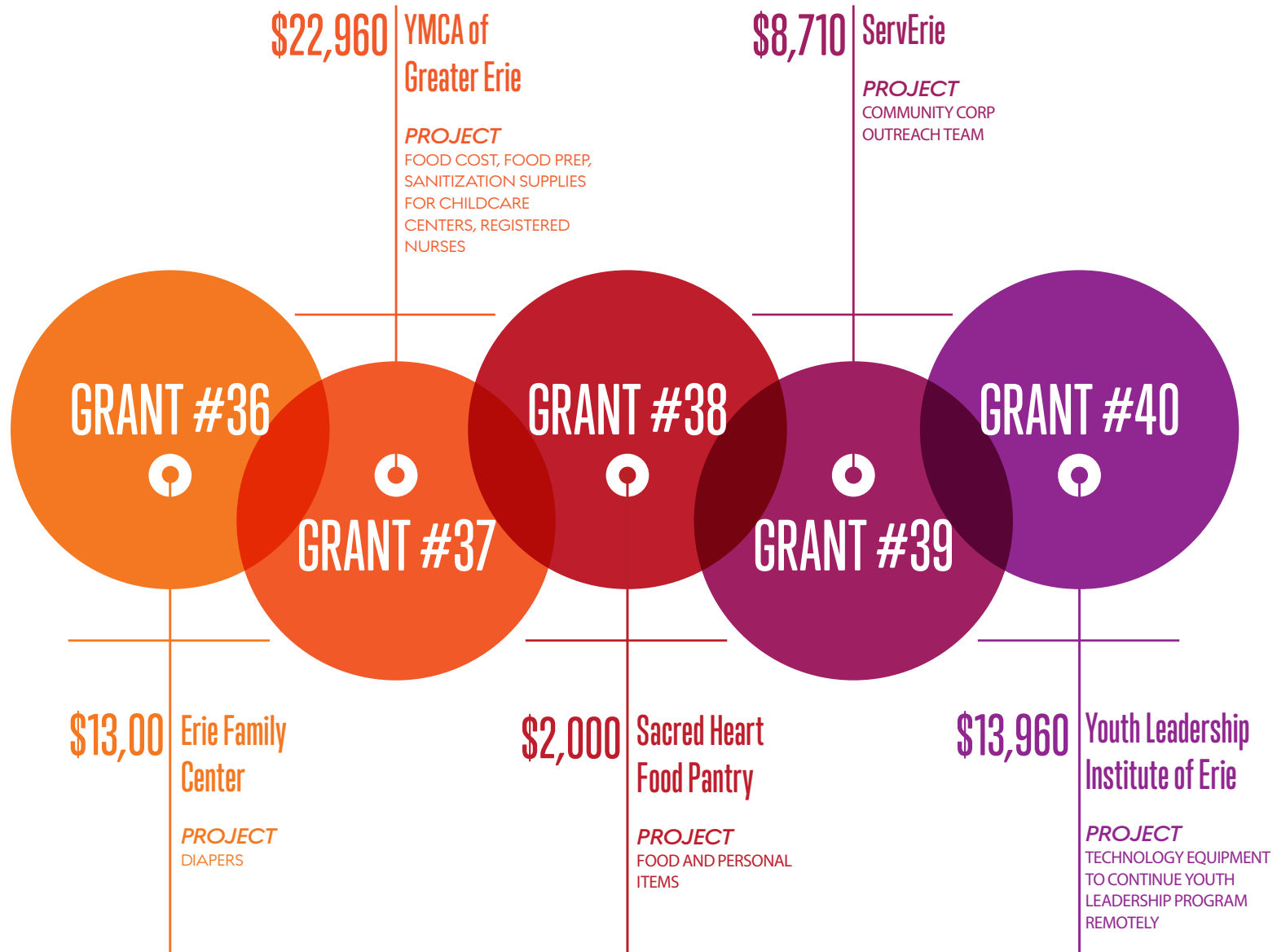
\$46,500

Penn State Behrend

PROJECT  
EXPANSION OF FACE  
SHIELD PROJECT AND  
N95 LEVEL FACE  
SHIELDS









up to  
**\$20,000**

**Project Face Shield for  
Public Safety & Human  
Services**

**PROJECT**

PURCHASE AND SUPPLY  
OF FACE SHIELDS FOR ERIE  
COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY  
& HUMAN SERVICES  
EMPLOYEES

# Project Face Shield

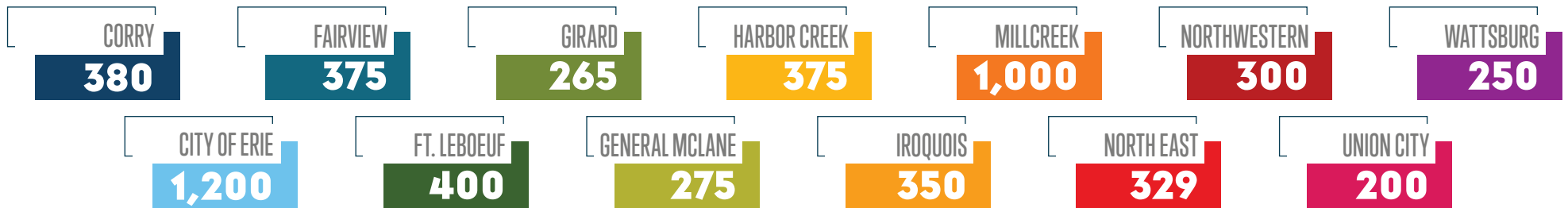
## Mission Completed

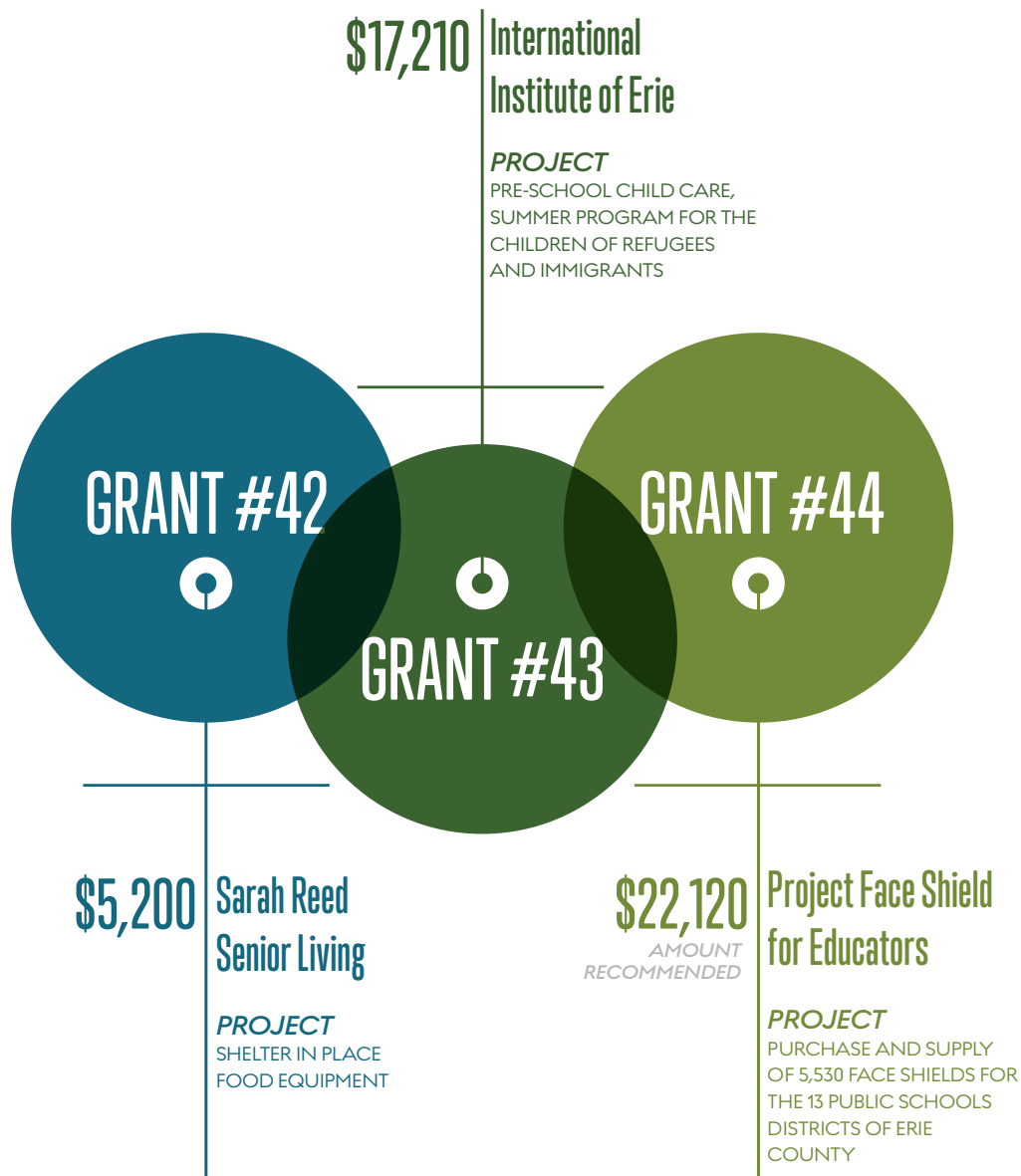
## 6,830 Face Shields

At the height of the crisis, ECGRA doubled down on an investment to arm area non-profit employees with 500 face shields. ECGRA initially purchased and coordinated the distribution of facemasks for local police and fire with a purchase of 500 face shields.

Along with the investment for non-profits and local police and fire, ECGRA also purchased and supplied employees of 13 public school districts of Erie County with 5,830 face shields.

The 13 public school districts of Erie County supplied ECGRA with the following face shield requests:





## Closing Notes

The success of the Erie County Emergency Relief Fund can be attributed to swift action on the part of Erie County Council and ECGRA officials to approve the local funding necessary to deliver expeditiously, while counties across Pennsylvania awaited state and federal funding relief. The ECGRA strategic investment model is a proven asset to Erie County that allowed for an efficient and transparent distribution of funds.