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.
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.

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
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.

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.

“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 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
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 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

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<tr>
<th>Allegheny Health Network</th>
<th>New Beginnings Food Pantry</th>
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<td>Cathedral of St. Paul Food Pantry</td>
<td>Northwestern Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Center City Apartments Food Pantry</td>
<td>Sacred Heart Church Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Christian Cupboard Food Pantry</td>
<td>St. Boniface Church Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Church of the Nativity Food Pantry</td>
<td>St. George Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Community of Caring Food Pantry</td>
<td>St. James Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Community of Caring Diabetic Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Edinboro Emergency Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Ella Cochran Food Pantry</td>
<td>St. Martin Center</td>
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<td>Emmaus Food Pantry</td>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
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<td>Erie City Mission Food Pantry</td>
<td>Sister Pascal Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Fairview Presbyterian Food Pantry</td>
<td>Sisters of Saint Joseph</td>
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<td>Federated Church of East Springfield</td>
<td>Union City Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Glenwood United Methodist Church Food Pantry</td>
<td>Union City Full Gospel Church Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Henderson United Methodist Church Food Pantry</td>
<td>Wesleyville Interfaith Food Pantry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kearsarge Area Food Pantry</td>
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* List as of 3/26/2020
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.
GRANT #1
Emergency Shelter System

PROJECT
EMERGENCY SHELTER FUNDING FOR THE HOMELESS

GRANT #2
North East Community Food Pantry

PROJECT
FUNDS TO SUPPLEMENT ADDITIONAL NEED DURING TIME OF CRISIS

GRANT #3
ERIE FAMILY CENTER

PROJECT
DIAPER DEPOT FOR THOSE IN NEED

GRANT #4
YMCA of Greater Erie

PROJECT
CHILD CARE CENTER FOR LIFE SUSTAINING PERSONNEL

GRANT #5
Mercy Center for Women

PROJECT
EMERGENCY HOMELESS SHELTER-RELATED COSTS DUE TO COVID-19 REGULATIONS

GRANT #6
Metro-Erie Meals on Wheels

PROJECT
TRANSPORTATION COSTS RELATED TO FOOD DISTRIBUTION FOR HOMEBOUND ELDERLY

GRANT #7
The Upper Room

PROJECT
COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH INCREASED REGULATIONS DUE TO COVID-19 REGULATIONS

GRANT #8
Mercy Center for Women

PROJECT
EMERGENCY HOMELESS SHELTER-RELATED COSTS DUE TO COVID-19 REGULATIONS

$12,500

$7,500

$9,525

$2,000

$1,000

$16,000

$5,000
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.
GRANT #17
HVA Senior Living Alliance
PROJECT TECHNOLOGY COSTS RELATED TO TELEMEDICINE FOR SENIORS
$6,800

GRANT #18
St. Martin’s Center
PROJECT CHILD CARE CENTER PREPARATION COSTS
$7,300

GRANT #19
MECA Senior Care
PROJECT SANITIZING THE SENIOR CENTER FOR FUTURE OPENING
$3,850

GRANT #20
Erie United Methodist Alliance
PROJECT HOMELESS SHELTER RELATED COSTS
$2,365

GRANT #21
Bethany Outreach Center
PROJECT EMERGENCY HYGIENE AND FOOD DISTRIBUTION
$7,600

GRANT #22
MECA Senior Care
PROJECT EXPANSION OF FACE SHIELD PROJECT AND N95 LEVEL FACE SHIELDS
$46,500

GRANT #23
Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network
PROJECT STAFF COSTS DUE TO LOST VOLUNTEER BASE
$25,400
GRANT #31

Union City Food Pantry
PROJECT FOOD PANTRY SUPPLIES
$2,000

GRANT #32

Waterford Food Pantry
PROJECT FOOD PANTRY SUPPLIES
$5,000

GRANT #33

Harborcreek High School
PROJECT EAR SAVERS – 3D PRINTED PIECES THAT SAVE EARS FROM EXCESS CHAFFING FROM FACE MASKS
$1,000

GRANT #34

Elmwood Food Pantry
PROJECT FOOD PANTRY SUPPLIES
$2,000

GRANT #35

Edinboro Community & Economic Development Corporation
PROJECT FOOD RELIEF PACKAGES AND SUPPLIES
$9,370
GRANT #36 Erie Family Center
PROJECT DIAPERS
$13,000

GRANT #37

GRANT #38 Sacred Heart Food Pantry
PROJECT FOOD AND PERSONAL ITEMS
$2,000

GRANT #39

GRANT #40 Youth Leadership Institute of Erie
PROJECT TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT TO CONTINUE YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM REMOTELY
$13,960

YMCA of Greater Erie
PROJECT FOOD COST, FOOD PREP, SANITIZATION SUPPLIES FOR CHILDCARE CENTERS, REGISTERED NURSES
$22,960

ServErie
PROJECT COMMUNITY CORP OUTREACH TEAM
$8,710

Sacred Heart Food Pantry
PROJECT FOOD AND PERSONAL ITEMS
$2,000

ServErie
PROJECT COMMUNITY CORP OUTREACH TEAM
$8,710

Youth Leadership Institute of Erie
PROJECT TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT TO CONTINUE YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM REMOTELY
$13,960

GRANT #36

GRANT #37

GRANT #38

GRANT #39

GRANT #40
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:
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.