# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The COVID-19 Community Fund

Methodology

Spending

Covid-19 Community Fund Results

Challenges

Lessons Learned

Looking Forward

PPE for Covid-19

Continued, Increased, Need

Continuing to Mitigate Spread

Mental Health and Isolation Burnout

Vaccination and Distrust of the Medical Community

Education

Housing Instability

City Services

Economy

How Can United Way of Greater Newark Help

Newark’s Top Needs: Now and Post-Pandemic

Opportunity to Convene

Opportunity to Research

Opportunity to Research
THE COVID-19 COMMUNITY FUND

United Way of Greater Newark’s (UWGN) mission is to disrupt the cycle of poverty by convening, collaborating and investing in strategies to improve outcomes for children and families. UWGN has a long history of convening disaster funds in the community. For example, UWGN established the 9/11 fund, the Hurricane Sandy Relief fund and most recently, the Newark Water Fund. To that end, in order to support the community and our non-profit partners during the COVID-19 crisis, we have established the Community COVID-19 Fund. This is a regional fund serving our 13-municipality footprint including Newark, Irvington, East Orange, West Orange, South Orange, Orange, Belleville, Nutley, Maplewood, Kearny, Harrison, East Newark and North Arlington.

Strategy

UWGN also follows the guidelines established by FEMA (the Four Phases of Emergency Management) and sets up the fund to respond to the four phases: Preparedness (planning, training, drills), Mitigation (taking action to prevent or reduce the cause, impact, and consequences of disasters), Response (the response occurs in the immediate aftermath of the disaster), and Recovery (restoration efforts occur). See Chart 1 below for details.

Chart 1: COVID-19 Community Fund Strategy

- Preventing further spread of COVID-19
- Address the long term economic, educational, and public health impact of COVID-19
- Provide basic needs, food, shelter, and medical care to community members in emergency
- Prepare for the continued increase in emergency basic needs
Methodology

The COVID-19 Grant Funds from the United Way of Greater Newark (UWGN) were granted as emergency funds, which come with a different expectation than traditional grant funding. With emergency funding, basic needs are often prioritized and there is less expectation for rigorous measurement of impact. Still, where work has been done there is potential for learning and progress. To that end, grantees participated in two forms of evaluation:

- Final Grant Report Form
- Focus Groups (Four hour-long groups in total)

This assessment process helps increase the effectiveness of future rounds of UWGN Covid-19 Emergency funding, improve impact and sustainability of future projects, and help inform UWGN future direction.

Spending

16 grants were distributed from May 2020 to December 2020. Over half of the money went to mitigation and preparation efforts, mainly towards shelter for Newark residents without addresses that need housing in general or COVID positive individuals that need isolation. The rest went to respond and recover efforts. About one quarter of the funds went directly to food for Newark residents, and about ten percent or less went to salaries, gift cards (for food and other basic needs), and technology supplies. See table 1,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Category</th>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
<th>Purpose of Funding</th>
<th>Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Newark Department of Health</td>
<td>Isolation Sites/BedBugs</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Newark Department of Health</td>
<td>Medical Staff @ Isolation Site</td>
<td>175,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Montclair University</td>
<td>Vent Splitters/Shields</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Youth Development Clinic</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>12,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>Support Food Distribution</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>City of Newark (EHD)</td>
<td>Food Support Isolation Sites</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>Newark ShopRite</td>
<td>Mayors gift card program</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>FOCUS</td>
<td>Tech/Staff time</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>Calvary Baptist</td>
<td>Food Support</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>Catholic Charities</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>Bessie Green</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>NJ211</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>Newark Community Street Teams</td>
<td>PPE/ Staffing/Outreach</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>Double UP Food Bucks</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Needs</td>
<td>MEND</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COVID-19 COMMUNITY FUND RESULTS

Altogether, more than 474,245 Newark residents received a meal directly from the emergency relief funds.

Although the funds went to 16 organizations, through partnerships the funds brought more than 50 organizations together in multiple collaborations across the city.

- The Salvation Army converted the gym at the Westside Corps (699 Springfield Ave.) into a food distribution warehouse where food donations and bulk purchases were stored, packed, and distributed to individuals and partner agencies, with a fully functioning staff team.

- The Salvation Army distributed 200 slots of food per day directly to Newark residents Monday through Friday from the Westside Corps and the Ironbound Corps (135 Clifford St.),

- Increased the number of families served at Calvary Baptist Church weekly from 250 to 350, in multiple ways including distributing gift cards for Shoprite and Walmart, providing hot meals, and food supplement through the pantry.

- All eligible SNAP shoppers at Shoprite of Newark receive a “matching” coupon for produce equal to the amount of produce purchased, up to $5 per transaction, with a coupon redemption rate of 23%.

- At Bessie Green, the funds increased their capacity on site from feeding 150 elderly individuals over three days (with other funds) to now serving about 815 breakfast and lunch to-go meals during 5 service days per week. Serving about 665 more meals per week.

- Bessie Green was also able to provide culturally sensitive, high quality, and nutrient-dense, groceries for 1,020 immigrant women and children who do not qualify for benefits through traditional means.

- Bessie Green Emergency Food Pantry increased its ability to serve the community, open for emergency services 5 days per week (from 3) with longer hours.

- Bessie Green supported 100 unemployed mothers with diapers and baby food on a weekly basis.

- MEND partnered with the Community FoodBank of NJ to source, transport, pack and coordinate the distribution of available food to community organizations that were not existing agency partners with the CFBNJ, but which needed food for their clients due to the pandemic.

- Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark delivered to 20 local Essex pantries, including 11 in Newark. It is estimated that it delivered over 25,000 pounds of food which was then distributed to approximately 4,300 households. This translates into approximately 18,000 meals.
• FOCUS was able to purchase laptops and equipment to transition their whole staff to remote work, providing virtual services such as English as a Second Language instruction, after-school academic/enrichment virtual activities and family-child virtual activities.

• 211 was able to update the most current information for accessing 13 food resource centers, and added 8 additional new food resources that had not been in the database at the start of this project.

• The Youth Development Clinic was able to transition from in-person to a complete telehealth-based provision of services as of 3/23/2020.

• The Youth Development Clinic increased community outreach by supporting a community outreach specialist at 15 hours per week, as well as a grant-writer at 6 hours per week.

• The Youth Development Clinic acquired a direct subscription to HIPAA-Compliant telehealth services through Zoom, as well as an electronic mental record (Theranest) to aid in provision of telehealth services, managing 125 virtual sessions per week.

• The City of Newark was fully prepared to house up to 425 residents without addresses at hotels. Including wrap around support services, security and food services to all of the residents at the hotels.

• Hotel Indigo was fully prepared as a COVID isolation center, allowing residents without addresses to receive medical care while preventing the spread to one of Newark’s most vulnerable populations in residential shelters.

• The City of Newark provided meals 3 times a day for approximately 1 month (26 days) to all 425 residents without addresses.
CHALLENGES

• **Preparing for the worst:** There was/is no way to estimate the number of individuals who will need help, quarantine, isolation or emergency service. At Hotel Indigo specifically the utilization did not reach the limits expected, but being prepared was necessary.

• **Prioritizing Funding:** People are calling and reaching out for more resources and help than ever before, making it difficult to prioritize where the funds will be most impactful.

• **Staff placement:** Prioritization of staff was difficult, some staff already had contracts, and in some cases contracts had to be renegotiated.

• **Food supply:** Food delivery delays, supply shortages, storage (refrigeration and freezer capacity, and sourcing impacted the variety and quantity of food available, especially in the first few months of the pandemic.

• **Food distribution:** Food distribution related issues included food supply chain disruptions and loss of traditional food drive sources (businesses, schools and houses of worship).

• **Volunteer capacity:** Limited numbers of volunteers available and/or able to be on site and coordination of volunteers to cover staff when covid positive cases presented.

• **Emergency coordination:** Lack of comprehensive coordination of emergency/existing resources at a higher/government level to avoid duplication of efforts, in both Newark and all of Essex County.

• **Funding:** Delays in state funding and decreases of funding in general.

• **Extra costs:** The cost of doing business of doing business for businesses operating in-person services (rather than virtual) exceeded regular costs tremendously, including extra staffing/increased pay, round the clock cleaning clearing, residents in rental arrears, and PPE.
LESSONS LEARNED

• “The value of a coordinated and streamlined effort to get food resources throughout the community, and not limited to one area of Newark.”

• “The need to put in place a strategy to deal with an emergency like Covid-19 going forward.”

• “Over time we also learned of a number of organizations specific to Newark, in addition to food banks, that are critical in outreach and communication to SNAP shoppers — a huge array of service providers and community organizations that we began connecting with regularly. Overall, we learned that even when technology is lined up and SNAP sales are high, building relationships and learning the nuances of a community and a partner entity are the most critical elements of program success.”

• “Some of the biggest lessons learned in implementing the project was that many of the families we serve are Spanish-speaking. Therefore, we now have added to our bilingual staff. Another lesson learned was that we still need more bilingual community outreach. In addition, to improve our tracking and monitoring of the families that do not qualify for traditional means of benefit sources or non-natives so that we may better serve our community at large.”

• “The need for technical assistance in technology. The staff received a crash course in Google Classroom, Zoom, WebEx, and social media. Given the immediate mandate to stay at home there was no time to provide advance training. Everyone had to learn quickly and independently. Some staff were fast learners. Others were not. A great deal of time was spent troubleshooting and ironing out hiccups due to technical difficulties. This made it difficult to achieve certain expectations in delivering the services because of the several roadblocks that were experienced. Examples include creating the Google Classroom, having to change email domains, initially using Zoom but having to change to WebEx as per the district, mastering the features of the applications, compatibility issues between laptops, iPads, tablets, chromebooks, androids, iPhones, etc.”
LOOKING FORWARD

While some of Newark’s previous challenges will still be present post pandemic, an entirely new set of challenges will likely prevail. To better understand what these challenges might be and how UWGN might prepare to address them, listed below, the following themes of concerns came out of focus groups conducted with Community Fund Grantees.

PPE for Covid-19
Most organizations provided face masks, gloves, hand sanitizers and other cleaning supplies to be used by volunteers and staff, but prioritized funding in other areas rather than providing PPE to the individuals they were serving. Most organizations also spread basic information from the CDC, NJ Department of Health, NJ Department of Labor and the City of Newark, including safety, prevention, benefits, labor laws, and testing sites.

Continued, Increased, Need
Newark had food insecurity issues prior to the pandemic, and these needs have only increased due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Some pantries have stated they are now serving 50-60% more families on a regular basis and that increased need has shown no signs of letting up.

Continuing to Mitigate Spread
There is still a need to identify appropriate shelter for symptomatic Covid-19 positive Newark residents who are not ill enough to be in the hospital, either without addresses or living in any residential group settings. Without a continued costly space in a hotel for isolation (Hotel Indigo no longer in operation as an isolation site), there has to be another way to be prepared for an outbreak in residential group settings.

Mental Health and Isolation Burnout
Isolation, increased mental health issues and stressors, depression, increases in domestic violence, grant funding work in schools providing SEL support. Very difficult to even engage parents in school. More need for community-based services.

Vaccination and Distrust of the Medical Community
Many feel communication about the safety of the Covid-19 vaccine needs to be a priority for Newark. Focusing on rebuilding the connection of medical professionals with the community will strengthen residents’ faith in healthcare. There is a level of disconnect, fear, and mistrust of public health officials and leadership that needs to be repaired. This responsibility should not just fall on the government but the whole system including community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and others. To be successful in vaccine education and outreach with the most vulnerable populations in Newark, their influencers should be a part of the vaccine process. These influencers include: outreach workers, shelter staff, librarians, interns at organizations, and other frontline workers that are working with them every day. If these influencers have a high level of comfort with the vaccine and promote other safeguards to mitigate the spread of the virus, there is a higher chance of success with the community. These influencers should be at the table for the planning.

Education
The concerns for the holistic development of young people are paramount on service providers minds. Parents are tired and teachers and tired. Newark parents need to work to survive, and are often not supervising young people during school hours. Students are often not engaged, or absent altogether, from school. Losing out on so much in-person instruction and interaction with peers threatens their academic and social development. Younger children especially need and benefit from in-person instruction. There are fears students will not meet the standards in testing this year because the level of academic achievement is poor, which is already a concern annually in Newark.

Afterschool and summer programs saw much lower enrollment which would help stop the learning loss that is bound to be exacerbated not just in the summer, but throughout the disrupted school year. Many providers report
that young people are tired of being in front of the computer, and when logged on, students are not paying attention.

Parents need support with childcare, and help with supervising and engaging kids who are at home. They need increased opportunity for social interaction, virtual or outdoors. School and peer socialization are the lifeblood of kids’ development and they have been severely restricted.

**Housing Instability**
The temporary moratorium on evictions will lift at some point, and when it does people could be more than nine months behind on their rent or mortgage. There will be a huge influx of individuals needing services and there is no way to accurately estimate the future need. Support will be necessary to prevent people from becoming homeless as a result.

**City Services**
Every local government relies heavily on their property taxes. If people are very behind, the city services suffer.

**Economy**
The food pantries report that many people coming in have lost hours or have been terminated from their jobs. Some of those jobs might not come back (support teachers, bus drivers, and so on). While emergency funding is crucial, people are in arrears, and catching up won’t sustain their families unless they obtain employment.
How Can United Way Of Greater Newark Help

Newark’s Top Needs: Now and Post-Pandemic

- Resources for Newark residents at imminent risk of homelessness
- Job training and resources for re-employment, ideally in pandemic proof jobs
- Research and information gathering on a whole new population of individuals in need
- An Ambassadors program to promote more community education, tasked with identifying the influencers in each demographic
- Focus group on vaccine concerns, looking at distrust in community on very practical level

Opportunity to Convene

A really strong theme through all evaluation points of the Covid-19 Community Fund is that individuals and organizations are more willing to partner and collaborate than ever before. This provides a unique opportunity for UWGN as the organization is known for their ability to convene.

Newark would benefit greatly from convening groups of stakeholders around some of the key issues outlined in the “looking forward” section of this report. Almost all grantees mention the importance of getting the right people talking to each other, and that these individuals are more likely to talk to each other than ever before. The connections made now, while everyone has a heightened sense of concern and responsibility for the whole Newark community (rather than the specific individuals they serve), will improve the long-term landscape of social services in Newark.

Opportunity to Research

UWGN can help identify and understanding where the critical issues are in Newark. While each services organization sees the need from their own perspective and the individuals they are serving, they cannot see the aggregate picture. Examples are how problematic is food insecurity or the education gap post-pandemic in Newark. Seeing those numbers would help organizations and coalitions analyze, strategize and prioritize.

Opportunity to Research

UWGN can assist with resource mapping in partnership with organizations like 211. Information continues to be outdated very quick and its takes everyone to keep the community informed. There is a suggestion of using a text messaging service that provides community members quick links to resources or general informative messaging. Stronger referrals and partnerships can provide a holistic approach to meeting the Newark community’s needs.