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Media Contact:

Carolyn Human

Carolyn@carolynhuman.com

716.713.3472

WNY COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE FUND ANNOUNCES FUNDING TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS TO REGIONAL CHALLENGES

Buffalo, N.Y. – The Western New York COVID-19 Community Response Fund, a collaborative philanthropic effort launched in mid-March to address the COVID-19 crisis in our community, is announcing multiple grants through its Moving Forward Together (formerly Build Back Better) initiative. All of the grants support coordinated efforts to meet systems change needs in our region.

In June, the Fund issued a Request for Ideas (RFI) to uncover innovative ideas to address long-term and systemic challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The response from nonprofit leaders exceeded all expectations and 14 grants are being awarded to plan and implement ideas in the following sectors: housing and homelessness, health equity, education, arts and culture, substance use disorders, mobility justice, criminal justice, digital literacy, refugee services and improved access to services and resources across the eight counties of Western New York.

All of the ideas collectively represent more than 200 public, private and nonprofit organizations working together toward solutions. The 14 RFI grants total nearly \$550,000. Ten of the grants are for planning and those organizations have been invited to develop their ideas into full proposals for funding consideration. To see the list of the RFI grantees, [please click here](#).

The WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund has also awarded three other grants totaling nearly \$400,000, which will support the following collaborative change efforts:

- **Food Security:** Understanding that food security has been a major need during the COVID-19 crisis, a community-focused, regionally coordinated planning initiative is now underway in Western New York. The Fund has provided a grant to support this effort that is bringing together stakeholders representing diverse aspects and perspectives of the region's food system. The group will identify action steps to reduce vulnerabilities in Western New York's regional food system and its reliance on producers outside of the region, change the entrenched, chronic conditions that have perpetuated long-term food insecurity in Western New York, and support food-based economic development and production growth. A Request for Proposals has been issued to support this effort that can be found on www.WNYResponds.org and responses are due September 23, 2020.

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- **Public Policy:** The Fund has awarded a grant to the [Partnership for the Public Good](#) to embark on a yearlong public policy and advocacy initiative in partnership with the nonprofit sector, and with significant input from the community, that will be focused on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and needed changes in public policy at the local and state levels.
- **Personal Protective Equipment:** A grant was made to [Visually Impaired Advancement](#) (VIA), formerly Olmsted Center for Sight, to lead and support an effort to help nonprofits in Western New York source reliable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and leverage their collective buying power. It was clear very early on that PPE was critical to reopening safely and sourcing it was a major challenge for nonprofits focused on serving our community.
- **Digital Divide:** The Fund is also in the process of beginning to look at identifying solutions to bridge the digital divide in Western New York. This divide is impacting service delivery for everything from healthcare to education and is creating barriers to learning and earning for our most vulnerable residents.

The WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund was launched on March 24, 2020, and to date has raised nearly \$9 million dollars from 70 local foundations and private sector companies, more than 40 community leaders and approximately 1,900 individuals. To see a full list of contributors, or to join the effort, please visit www.WNYResponds.org.

The Fund has now awarded over \$7.8 million to more than 400 nonprofits through three rounds of emergency grant funding, a microgrants program and the Moving Forward Together initiative.

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