

COVID-19: five things philanthropists can do

By Perpetual Impact
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As governments and non-for-profit organisations struggle to keep up with the rapid changes around the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we've received numerous enquiries from philanthropists asking how they can effectively contribute to our communities in these uncertain times. Perpetual's Philanthropy Team have spoken to sector leaders, peak bodies and

other philanthropic leaders to provide you with five ways you can help address critical community needs.

1. **Offer untied funding**

Australia's community sector knows how to respond to a crisis. Our charities and not-for-profit (NFP) organisations are on the front line every time there's a disaster or whenever there are Australians in need. That's why, we encourage philanthropists to offer untied funding and/or remove restrictions on existing grants to organisations working on the front line.

Untied funding helps pay for the essentials that keep our community organisations running; allowing them to adapt quickly and direct funds where they are most needed.

Sector leaders tell us this funding 'can be a lifeline'.

2. **Invest in capacity building**

It's important that philanthropists support the long-term infrastructure and people needed for an NFP to operate sustainably through this crisis and beyond. This may mean providing funds to support staff salaries or helping organisations invest in technology or software upgrades that may be required as more of their people work from home. It could also extend to helping NFP boards hire consultants to assist during this difficult time; anything that helps meet immediate needs and supports the organisation in delivering on its long-term strategy, aim and purpose.

We need to build a culture in philanthropy where investment in capacity is seen as vital to ensuring the success of an organisation's mission. Ask organisations what their capacity needs are and be willing to support them.

3. **Provide direct support to the areas that may need it most**

Many hospitals are on the front line of this crisis, they're establishing 'fever clinics' and seeing an upswing in patients with a need for beds and ventilator support. Our hospitals will need to be prepared for the everchanging nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are many NFPs struggling to keep up with the increased demand for critical services, including housing support agencies, food security organisations and education providers.

Philanthropists can consider funding these organisations directly; providing resources to increase their resilience. For example, they can help fund much-needed medical equipment (ventilators, monitors) and invest in medical staff. Or should schools need to be closed for an extended period, they may consider providing funds for laptops or tablets to support disadvantaged students who don't have them to be able to stay connected to their teachers and schools.

4. **Fund agencies that support the most vulnerable, like older Australians**

Although COVID-19 is a widespread pandemic, we know that some communities – like older Australians, individuals with chronic health conditions or impaired immune systems and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities – are more vulnerable to serious infection. Philanthropists can consider contributing support by investing directly in aged care and health services or Indigenous led organisations specifically set up to support the health and wellbeing of those communities most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. **Be understanding and advocate for long-term change**

Successful philanthropy requires patience and understanding. During this time, many NFPs may be under considerable pressure and resources may be stretched. This could affect reporting and some other business-as-usual activities may change or be delayed.

Now more than ever, it's vital to stand behind and encourage community partners as they face numerous challenges. It's also a chance for philanthropists to leverage their power to help community stakeholders, business leaders, and public sector leaders collaborate in a way that ensures a coordinated and comprehensive response to COVID-19.

Philanthropists may consider using their influence to advocate for sustaining critical public health and community support infrastructure – even when we are not in crisis.

The Perpetual team supports the Community Council for Australia's Open Letter calling on State and Federal Governments to support the charity sector, it's workers, volunteers and the communities they protect and support.

We believe resilience (the ability to use available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations) can be actively promoted by philanthropists and others in the social sector. Philanthropists can play a valuable role in helping community-based organisations and NFPs prepare and enhance their crisis planning and emergency readiness so they can maintain operations and avoid disruptions in critical services and programs.

Now is the time to ensure that the sector is resourced to respond the way it knows best; now is the time to reach out and listen.

The Perpetual Philanthropy Team is here to support you. We continue to work actively with communities and philanthropists. Please contact our team directly using the form below to support your giving.

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