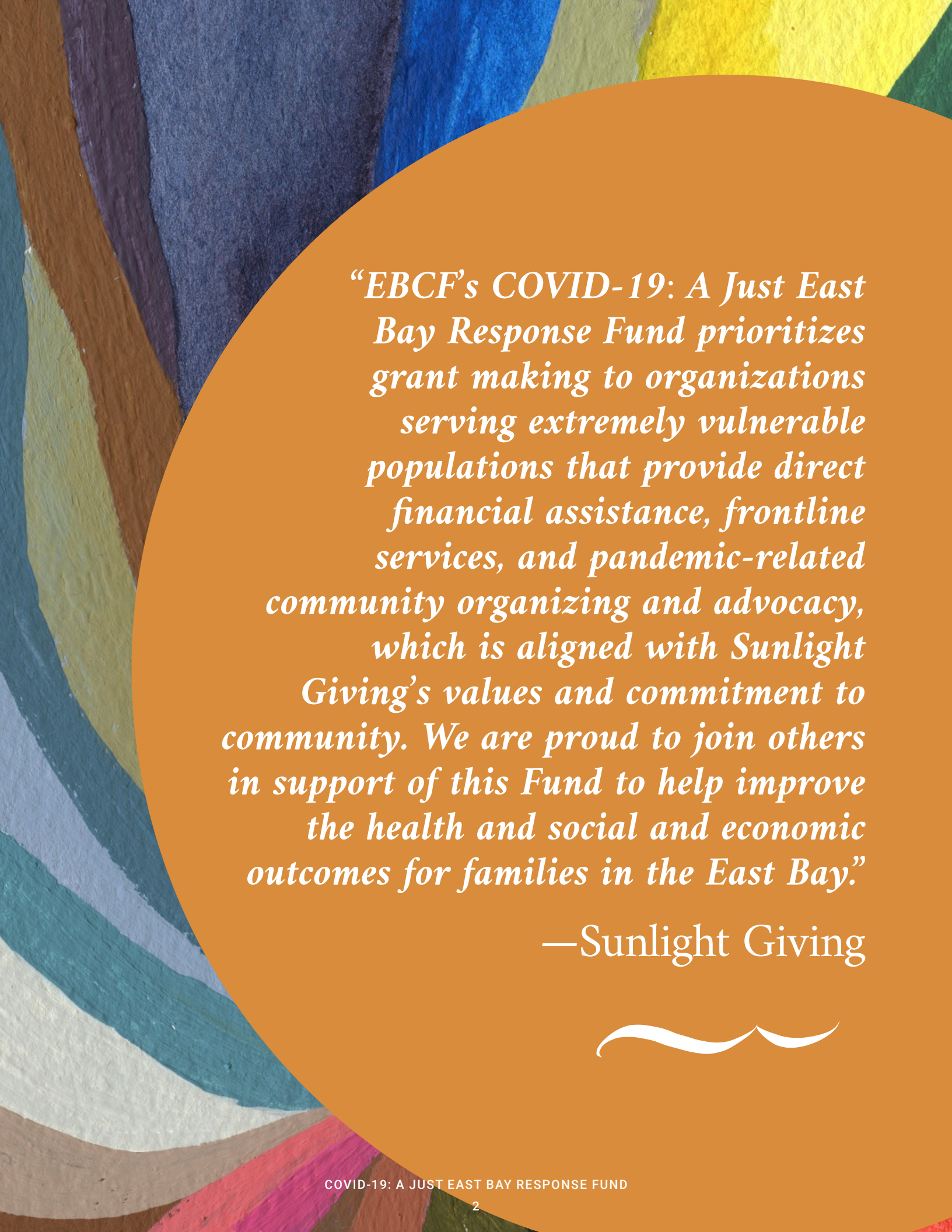




COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund

*Report on the
community response*

**EAST
BAY** COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



“EBCF’s COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund prioritizes grant making to organizations serving extremely vulnerable populations that provide direct financial assistance, frontline services, and pandemic-related community organizing and advocacy, which is aligned with Sunlight Giving’s values and commitment to community. We are proud to join others in support of this Fund to help improve the health and social and economic outcomes for families in the East Bay.”

—Sunlight Giving



Letter from James Head, CEO of East Bay Community Foundation

This past year has been one of the most challenging any of us has experienced. In addition to losing over half a million lives, we experienced state sanctioned murder, a white supremacist attack on our national Capitol, the largest protests in our history, and an election that threatened our very democratic principles. We suffered through wildfires, a year of sheltering in place, and a collapsing economy.

When COVID hit last year, nobody knew how long it would last or how severe this pandemic would be.

When the East Bay Community Foundation announced we were closing our offices on March 14 to shelter in place, we set our tentative reopening date for April 7, still quite unaware of the magnitude of what was to come. How little we knew.

That week, we also launched EBCF's COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund, a pooled fund that would support East Bay communities affected by COVID-19. We seeded this Fund with \$1 million, and the response from EBCF fund holders, community members, and institutional funders was overwhelming. We raised over \$8.2 million from individuals, companies, and foundations, and have distributed the funds to organizations that serve people who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, particularly communities of color. We were particularly focused on people who were at greatest risk of losing of income, experiencing food and housing insecurity, and suffering health impacts, among other challenges that this pandemic exacerbated.

To our donors and community partners, we feel grateful and honored that you partnered with EBCF during these extraordinary times. This report is a reminder of how your contributions of skills, time, financial generosity, and deep dedication to this community has made an extraordinary difference in the lives of others in the East Bay. We deeply appreciate you.

As we look ahead to the longer-term recovery of our community, we hope to build on this success and work together to create a more just, more equitable future for all people who call the East Bay home.

James W. Head
President & Chief Executive Officer
East Bay Community Foundation



The Generosity of the East Bay Community

The COVID-19 pandemic was a stunning reminder of the effects of inequities across our community in health care, employment, and education, among other areas. The Black Lives Matter movement built and exercised power in response to increasing attacks on Black people, often at the hands of law enforcement. Between the health crisis, economic fallout, anti-Black racism, and white supremacy that threatened our communities and country we were tested in almost unfathomable ways. And we saw the response of the people in the form of the largest uprisings for social and racial justice in our country's history.

It was in this context that the East Bay Community Foundation launched and stewarded our COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund in early 2020. Over the past year, we raised and distributed resources to organizations addressing the social, emotional, and economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, helping to meet the needs of communities and organizations affected by the coronavirus.

To date, the fund has provided over \$8.2 million in grants to nonprofit organizations in Alameda and Contra Costa counties that are providing critical services and addressing effects of the pandemic in the hardest-hit communities. We also supported communities that organized to secure policies and resources to protect essential workers, renters, and families trying to survive on low incomes.

This grantmaking was possible due to the generous support of many donors and philanthropic partners, as well as the deep community connections among organizers and nonprofits in communities around the region. We are grateful for the many ways the East Bay community has helped make this response possible.

Our Approach

We started the fund in March 2020 as the implications of the pandemic were becoming frighteningly clear. It was obvious that people who could least afford to lose their job, miss work, or stay home to take care of their children or other family members would be most affected by the pandemic. Thus, the strategy for the COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund was to be responsive to the community's needs and focus on our commitment to a Just East Bay. We listened closely to our nonprofit partners to learn where the needs were greatest, and we were eager to engage anyone who was interested in joining us as funding partners.



We committed to getting resources into the community quickly and without disrupting the work of our nonprofit partners. We did not require a formal application to receive funding, instead relying on our staff to extensively research and document the needs and work of community partners. We also eliminated reporting requirements for fund grantees.

We heard from community organizing partners that the immediate financial needs of the community were dire, and that they must also continue deep community organizing work to make lasting changes that would improve long-term health, stability, and vitality of communities, especially in an election year. As one of few funds in the region to provide direct financial assistance to people, we partnered with organizers to do what they do best: connect with community, support immediate needs, and build power for the long term.

“We were already impressed with EBCF’s priorities for grant-making focused on BIPOC-led organizations and direct financial assistance. So when the pandemic became reality, EBCF’s COVID-19 rapid response seemed to be the most efficient way to chip away at exacerbated inequities.”

— Jordan Flanders and Andrew Kushner

COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund grantmaking priorities

Direct financial assistance to individuals and families experiencing extreme economic hardship

This funding went to organizations that have deep and extensive networks of relationships with individuals and families, and are best positioned to identify individuals and families in extreme economic hardship and assess levels of financial support needed. When the shelter-in-place order was enacted, many of these organizations conducted phone canvassing and surveyed their membership to immediately identify individuals and families in need.

Frontline organizations providing essential services to people most harmed by the pandemic

Nonprofit partners in Alameda and Contra Costa counties responded to a range of needs from communities that had been most affected. The immediate priority was emergency relief, including medical care, food distribution, resource navigation, mental health services, and assistance to people experiencing domestic violence.

Unrestricted grants to existing grantees to assist their operations and related impacts during the crisis

Community-based organizations across our region have been incredibly resilient and adaptive in the face of the pandemic, shelter-in-place orders, and multiple compounding crises. These general operating support grants helped them weather the many challenges they face.

Supporting community organizing and systems change

We placed a priority on community organizing and systems change efforts among the funding categories of the COVID-19: A Just East Bay Respond Fund. We are one of only a handful of funds across the country that puts a focus on organizing and systems change. In addition to providing essential services to their members and the broader community, organizing groups and coalitions advanced bold, responsive campaigns to protect the community. They continue to work to shape policies, structures, and systems that respond to this moment as well as address the historic inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

We put a priority on getting resources to organizations working with people who are put at particular risk of the health and financial challenges of the pandemic, especially people who are unlikely to receive state or federal support. This included undocumented immigrants, people without a stable place to live, people employed in the cash economy, the uninsured and under-insured, youth, survivors of domestic violence, seniors living on low incomes, and the formerly incarcerated.

We focused on organizations with Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and South Asian, South-west Asian, and North African (SSWANA) leadership, and we wanted to ensure that our funding went to neighborhoods in Alameda and Contra Costa County that are chronically under-resourced. One of East Bay Community Foundation's core programmatic strategies is to fund social movements led by communities with the most lived experience with the issues at hand. In this critical moment for the East Bay, it continued to be our focus. In addition to organizations with close community connections, we looked for groups that focused on health equity and housing rights, which were particularly important given the health and housing crises that were exacerbated by shelter-in-place orders.

We focused on providing core funding for organizations providing direct financial assistance, as well as supporting organizers who were best able to advocate for the needs of the community. These issues included:

- Loss of employment and decreased hourly work, resulting in reduced income
- Closures of schools and childcare centers, resulting in lost earnings as parents were unable to work when their children were at home
- Increased health care costs for testing and treatment, and loss of income as individuals were forced to take time off for self-care and to care for family members
- Food insecurity resulting from lower individual and family income
- Reduced access to a range of social services and programs in response to social distancing requirements



“Partnering with EBCF has enabled the Foundation to reach more nonprofits and community residents. EBCF was a logical partner as they were ready for action, with the ability to distribute resources quickly, and are deeply embedded in the local East Bay region. We are thrilled to have been an early contributor to their Just East Bay Response Fund, providing emergency supports to our most vulnerable residents and helping our local nonprofits stay afloat. Their ability to catalyze resources is beyond impressive.”

—Glenda Monterroza,
Program Manager,
Blue Shield of California Foundation



As the pandemic continued, we remained in constant communication with our partners. We were tremendously impressed at how nonprofit staff worked together across organizations to buy groceries and other supplies in bulk and share costs of storage and delivery. They learned new technical skills and worked quickly to update their technology so staff could work remotely and shift to providing services virtually where possible.

Our partners adapted to changing priorities as time went on. The spring and summer were particularly challenging for people working to advance racial equity and justice at the height of a pandemic that was claiming Black and brown lives at disproportionate rates.

Organizations and their staff were living and managing their community response through compounding and concurrent crises. In one deeply challenging moment, they faced a health crisis and economic fall-out, unemployment and housing insecurity, anti-Black racism and white supremacy. The burden of each of these crises disproportionately affects people of color and people surviving on low wages.

Conversations with our partners and colleagues led us to deepen our focus on helping organizations support staff wellness and care, in particular at Black-led organizations. We also shifted our frontline and direct assistance to focus on providing stability for people coming home from incarceration and out of the unmanaged deadly outbreaks of COVID-19 at jails and prisons around the region. We also responded to the increasing number of people in unstable housing. We added these focus areas to our existing funding:

- Funding for organizations providing mental and behavioral health services that are led by, staffed by, and serving Black, Indigenous and people of color in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.
- Support for unsheltered individuals and families, as well as people experiencing housing instability and potential housing loss due to the pandemic.
- Resources for on-going decarceration efforts and helping people safely return to their communities.

Continuing this focus, in February 2021 we made grants from the fund explicitly to Black-led, Black-serving organizations.

We continue to focus our efforts based on what we hear from organizations working closest to people who are hardest hit by the pandemic and the underlying inequities it has revealed. We will continue to partner with community organizers, donors, and people from all corners of the community to make the change necessary for a more just East Bay.

Timeline of the Fund and Milestones of the Year





Community Partners in Action

Grants from the Fund helped provide for essentials like the following:

- Buying groceries and food for food pantries
- Housing assistance, including paying rent and utility bills
- Finding and accessing public benefits and relief funds
- Assisting families with distance education and digital access issues
- Outreach with health information, translated into appropriate languages
- Employment assistance
- Assistance paying for child care
- Legal assistance to assert workers' rights and renters' rights, representation, and advising against predatory employers and landlords
- Mental health support services
- Resources for formerly incarcerated people returning home on early release
- Support for people who lost employment or lost income due to decreased hourly work, resulting in reduced income
- Providing personal protective equipment, especially for people working in the cash economy or environments where employers do not provide safety equipment (home health aides, nail salons, day laborers, gig workers)

Grants from the Fund also went to organizing and advocacy efforts that address long-term and root causes of injustices that are amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as:

- Protections against eviction and advocacy for rent forgiveness
- Supporting efforts to bring incarcerated people home, out of dangerously overcrowded and unsafe jail and prison conditions
- Passing legislation requiring employers to tell workers when there are COVID-19 cases in the workplace, to create safe distance and equipment protocols, and payment protection to pay employees who test positive so they can quarantine without taking a hit to their paychecks
- Advocating for policies that protect clean air and water for all East Bay residents, particularly mobilizing against local sources of industrial pollution, addressing root causes of the health disparities for Black, Brown and Indigenous communities highlighted by the pandemic

How the COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund Made a Difference in the East Bay


The following are selected stories from our grantees that share how the Fund made a difference.

- The staff of the **CA Healthy Nail Salon** shared with us: “One of our member leaders, Anh, a nail salon owner, received aid from our Nail Salon Community Care Fund with the support of our Outreach and Program Coordinator. After paying commercial rent in March for her salon, she only had \$15 left in her bank account. She was so happy to be able to get some financial support. She said that the Collaborative has been the only source of support for her during this time, and any funds that she has received has been due to our help. Anh has been an active member leader in the organization for over 6 years, from attending trainings, being a spokesperson with media, and offering her salon as a local hub for our PPE distribution program.”
- In describing the kinds of impact that direct financial assistance awards have had for people who received them, staff from **Jakara Movement** told us: “Transformational and heart-breaking. From rent to groceries, from buying a bed to keeping their phone - the DFA was a true lifeline for many.”

“EBCF’s COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund aligns perfectly with our priorities - helping those who are farthest from resources during these challenging times.”

—Susan and Mark Stutzman





“In times of crisis, the people who are most vulnerable are also least able to benefit from the usual grant process. They need help NOW and cannot wait for the next grant cycle. Their needs do not conform with our “strategic priorities.” Our response needs to conform with their needs and time frame. By participating in EBCF’s COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund, we can achieve that response criteria.

As we learned about EBCF’s strategy to address both the direct financial needs of individuals and families and the frontline organizations that serve them, we at East Bay Foundation on Aging felt we could most quickly get our resources into the community by partnering with EBCF. Having built a partnership with EBCF over the past couple of years, we were assured of the deep ethical foundation of EBCF’s work to provide assistance to the most underserved and vulnerable populations in the East Bay.”

—Lucinda Bazile, MPH,
East Bay Foundation on Aging

- The staff at **Eden United Church of Christ** described some of their experiences in providing direct financial assistance: “The most common need for financial assistance was rent. Our financial policies require written documentation of an expense in order for a check to be cut. We had to provide a lot of guidance for some recipients about how to acquire a written rental agreement, and proof of residence before we could issue a partial rent check. So approaches emphasizing personal outreach and persistence made a difference. A further challenge we encountered was the disturbing percentage of beneficiaries who reported being threatened by owners’ representatives to report them to ICE if they didn’t pay their rent in full and on time.”
- Teferi,* a member of the **Vietnamese American Community Center of the East Bay**, is originally from Ethiopia, and was working as an app driver in the Bay Area when COVID began. Suddenly facing a steep decline in business, they helped him apply for unemployment benefits. He struggled to afford basic needs while waiting for his unemployment benefits to come through, which were delayed for many people during COVID-19, so they supported him with direct financial assistance to help meet his family’s basic needs while he waited for benefits. While unemployed, they connected him to a fully-funded truck driving training to receive his Class A Driver’s License. He successfully completed the training last month, and recently started a full-time truck driver job, complete with benefits.
- Maria* has been cleaning houses in the Oakland area for over 20 years. She lives in Oakland with her husband and three children. Her husband has a small store, which he had to close due to shelter-in-place restrictions. Maria could no longer clean houses because of shelter in place. With a grant from the **Oakland Undocumented Relief (OUR) Fund at Centro Legal de la Raza**, which EBCF’s COVID-19 Response Fund supported, they were able to buy groceries for their family, pay bills, and have money for transportation.
- When asked which COVID-related issues they are addressing through their organizing and systems change efforts, the staff of the **Safe Return Project** told us: “We are currently working on the housing issues that our community is facing during this pandemic. During our survey and outreach in East Contra Costa County, we have heard from the community that they are worried about being evicted once the rent freeze is over in Contra Costa County. We are also partnering with other organizations to help those who are being released early from jails and prisons. We want to make sure that they have a place to go upon release.”

**Names changed to preserve privacy.*

Snapshot of grants awarded from the Fund

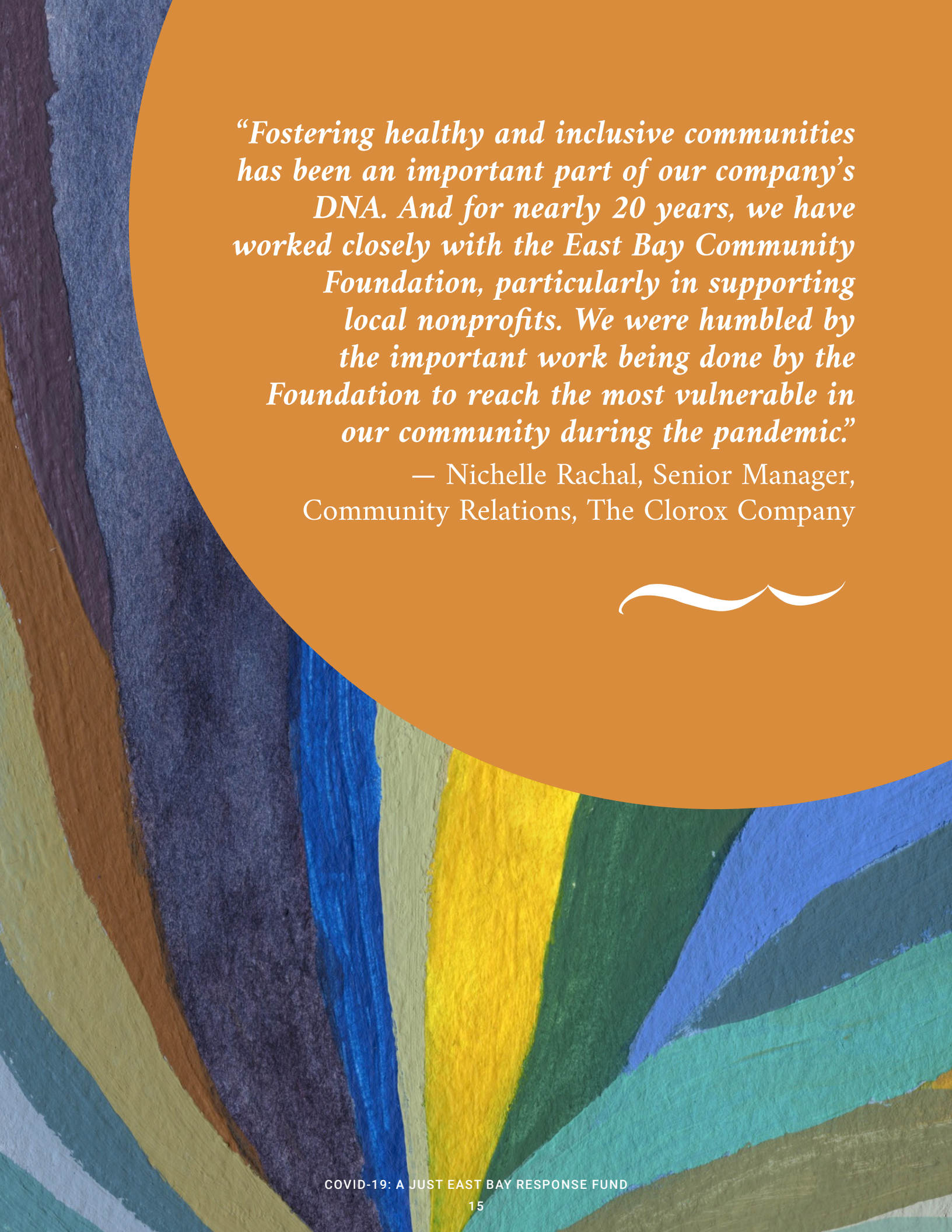
\$8.2M grants allocated through 371 grants

A majority of organizations supported by the fund have a majority of staff, leadership and board that are Black, Indigenous and people of color.

- **Average grant: \$22,103**
- **Grant range: \$5,000-\$46,000**
- **Grantmaking areas:**
 - Direct financial assistance: \$1,935,000
 - Frontline organizations providing essential services: \$1,390,000
 - Organizing/systems change: \$1,025,000
 - General support to existing grantees: \$995,000
 - COVID-19 related decarceration efforts and early release support services: \$700,000
 - COVID-19 mental health services: \$1,015,000
 - COVID-19 support for unsheltered people: \$700,000
 - Staff care and wellness: \$440,333
- **Grantmaking by county:**
 - 51% of grants to organizations based in Alameda County
 - 23% of grants to organizations based in Contra Costa County
 - 26% of grants to organizations based in both counties

To see a full list of grantees, visit: ebcf.org/covid19fund

- The staff of **Safe Alternatives to Violent Environments** (SAVE) describe the needs and gaps they see in their community and within their organization in the coming months as follows: “The biggest gap is in infrastructure. We need to upgrade our technology so that ALL people can access us. This means adding text platforms to our website and crisis line so clients who can’t come in person can still access services in private.”
- “The current realities have placed housing justice as a central issue given the potential for massive COVID evictions once rental protections sunset, as many young people and families are unable to pay mortgages, mortgages or rent for their house or apartment.” Funding from EBCF’s COVID-19 Response Fund has helped support **Power California** in engaging and mobilizing young people throughout Alameda and Contra Costa by organizing them to take the lead on campaigns like registering their peers to vote, lowering the voting age, and making sure corporations pay their fair share. “In the past six months Power California has organized multiple actions and targeted local and statewide leaders – California Governor, State Senators, County & School Board officials – to demand economic justice, housing justice, climate justice, and safety for young people & their families. Power California developed and shaped narratives centering young people voices and needs in the rebuild and recovery and asserting bold demands around housing, environmental justice, worker protections, and the economy, to demand a government that works for all of us.”



“Fostering healthy and inclusive communities has been an important part of our company’s DNA. And for nearly 20 years, we have worked closely with the East Bay Community Foundation, particularly in supporting local nonprofits. We were humbled by the important work being done by the Foundation to reach the most vulnerable in our community during the pandemic.”

— Nichelle Rachal, Senior Manager,
Community Relations, The Clorox Company



An Overwhelming Response from the Community

Thanks to the generosity of new donors and long-standing partners, we raised \$8.2M from more than 721 donations.

\$1.0M from East Bay Community Foundation

\$3.6M from individuals, including:

\$2.3M from EBCF fundholders through 126 donations

\$1.3M from community donors, matching gifts, etc.

\$3.6M from over 20 institutions, including:

\$2.2M in allocations from Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Regional COVID-19 Fund

Thank You for Your Support

During the pandemic, the donor community at the East Bay Community Foundation came together like never before. Long-time partners joined new donors to invest dollars collectively, and dedicated their time and energy to fight injustice at both the local and national levels. We worked with donors who came to us seeking guidance on local East Bay groups fighting racial injustice and advocating for police reform. We helped donors assist national groups or groups in the South or Minnesota working on these issues following George Floyd's murder. We were able to quickly respond and partner with you, sharing information about Black, Indigenous, and people of color-led organizations in these areas. We were inspired by the questions you asked, the challenges you wanted to take on, and the openness to be changed by what you learned during this time.

We know that true change will require us to come together to address inequity and racism at the root. That requires us all to challenge long-held beliefs and to acknowledge the tension and even discomfort of moving into a more just community and society.

Thanks to the trust you placed in us, many of you were open to investing in our pooled COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund, which you said was the most effective way to make an immediate and lasting impact. We take this trust very seriously. It is our firm belief that when donors come together and support grassroots leaders to respond to their communities' needs, we can provide support that makes a difference very quickly. Times like these require those of us with privilege to listen deeply, offer our financial support, and stand in allegiance with the people on the frontlines.

Thank you for your generous investment in the East Bay Community Foundation during this extraordinary time. It is an honor to partner with you in serving our community.

Looking Ahead

The challenges that our community and country face have a long history. Many did not start with the pandemic and will not end there. Many of us have realized that we cannot go back to "normal" after this pandemic is officially over. "Normal" for many of our East Bay community members and for many Americans is not good enough. Many of our neighbors live on the edge – they deserve peace of mind about their job, their health, their safety, and their families. The pandemic has challenged us to dream of a different kind of normal, in which every person in the East Bay can live a life with dignity, opportunity, and justice.

We are all changed by this time and we will do whatever we can to ensure that what comes next is better, bolder, equitable, and just. EBCF is putting our resources towards building this more just and equitable future. We are committed to re-igniting a variety of learning, community building, and investment opportunities with you.

Together we can embark upon a journey of collective reflection and growth. We must challenge ourselves to never forget 2020 and the unimaginable suffering people felt. We cannot forget how we got here. We must continue to dig deep and dream and change ourselves, our families, and our society.

We hope you join us on this journey as our COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund evolves into the ongoing A Just East Bay Fund at EBCF. This will continue the work to transform systems to bring about a vision of A Just East Bay, and we must learn, grow, and strengthen our own understanding to make this happen. Through this effort we endeavor to:

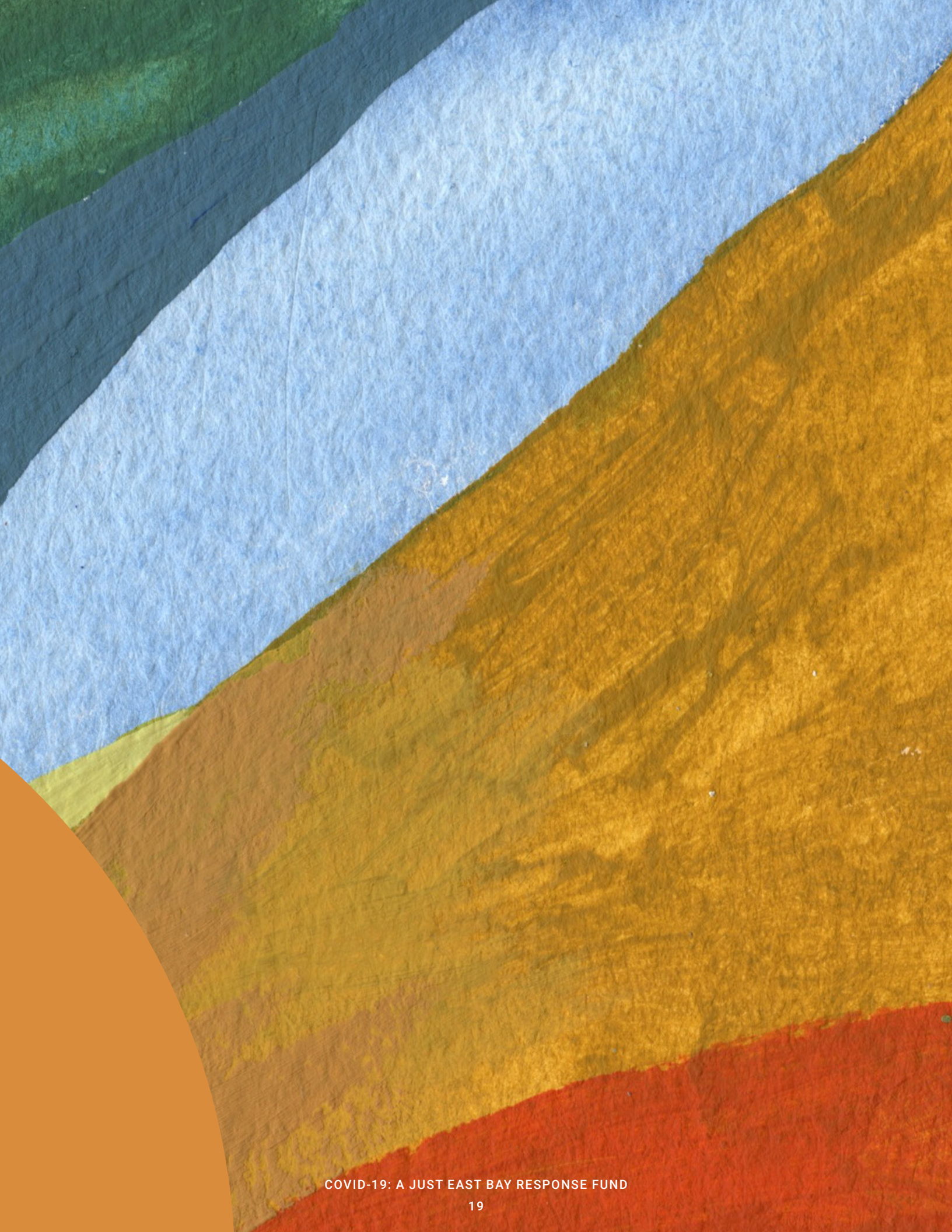
- Support communities most harmed by systems of oppression to build power and advance justice. We do this by supporting the community's own vision, listening and following their lead, and acknowledging they are the experts in what's best for their families and futures.
- Transform ourselves and the systems we are part of. We need to gain a deeper understanding of the ways we each participate in systems that perpetuate harm, and take on the work as individuals and an institution to rework our practices. This includes how we do our grantmaking, make investments, and amplify new and inspiring voices.
- Use the position of power we hold to move others, and cede our power to people and communities that have been historically excluded.

For each of us, it may start with learning more or focusing our giving in new ways, but ultimately, we are building a strong base for bold transformative change that encompasses each of us and our work.



“EBCF’s COVID-19 A Just East Bay Respond Fund gave our family foundation the opportunity to support organizations that provide services for individuals in vulnerable situations. We are proud and grateful to partner with the EBCF on this important project.”

— Deborah Kirshman, Chair,
Helzel Family Foundation





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