

COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund for Otsego County

a Proposal by

Community Foundation of Otsego County

CALL TO ACTION

COVID-19 has changed our world. Our community faces dire health and economic shocks that have disrupted our way of life and will continue to affect us for the foreseeable future.

The Community Foundation of Otsego County was created in 2019 with the mission of improving the quality of life for all the Otsego County area. We were about to publicly announce our formation when COVID-19 attacked. Rather than wait until the emergency passes, the Board of the Foundation has decided now is the time of greatest need and the Foundation must take a leading role in addressing the challenge.

For those not familiar with CFOC and how we have been building resources to announce our introduction to the Otsego County community, we are an IRS designated nonprofit public charity (501c3). Our mission is to improve the quality of life for all in the Otsego County area primarily through gathering financial assets to direct to existing nonprofits in our county – to help them solve problems we all recognize and that are common to rural areas. We have an excellent Board of Directors (see attached) with members dedicated to our mission.

Community foundations across the nation have taken leadership roles in establishing COVID-19 relief funds. Albany, Syracuse, Utica and Rochester all have established their funds through local community foundations. In each city, local governments, businesses, and service organizations have joined as sponsors, making these funds a central point for donations to meet the emergency needs of their communities.

CFOC proposes that we now set up a fund for Otsego County. Initially, the Fund will direct its resources to emergency relief. Once the crisis abates, and if resources remain, the Fund will shift its emphasis to recovery efforts.

The proposed Fund will gather money to address immediate needs (the relief part of the Fund) in Otsego County. We know that unemployment is rising and we are seeing growing numbers of potentially fatal illnesses. The nonprofit service sector of our economy will be faced with overwhelming assistance requests.

The Fund will be a general fund. Every \$1 donated will be disbursed as grants (CFOC and maybe a few private foundations or businesses will underwrite the administrative expenses). Grants will be limited to existing nonprofits that have proven abilities to deliver services (CFOC does not currently have the expertise or time to evaluate new organizations).

The Fund should be created as the major county-wide effort to use private donations to address the COVID-19 emergency. To do this, CFOC must partner with local governments, key businesses, and large private foundations. **We are asking you to join us as a Sponsor of the Fund. For those organizations**

that can also make a donation, your financial support would be very much appreciated and will make a big difference in our reception by the entire community.

To be clear, this fund is an additional resource and cannot replace local, state or federal funding. Nor is it designed to shift funds away from existing nonprofits – in fact, grants awarded by the Fund will go entirely to nonprofits to deliver services. Please do not support our efforts at the expense of your continuing support of existing and productive nonprofit organizations.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FUND

Our immediate concern is relief. We will rely upon existing nonprofit organizations that are on the front lines of responding to these needs. Grants will be issued to meet the following priorities:

- Support for medical workers, EMTs, police, firefighters, and others in essential industries who risk their own health to serve the community.
- Prevention measures such as education and sanitary supplies to limit the spread of the virus.
- Support for vulnerable populations, i.e. older adults with compromised immune systems, and people who are unhoused.
- Practical needs, in case of disruption in services to vulnerable populations, such as meal delivery and daily living support for homebound older adults.
- Food access and other practical support for people who have lost wages or are unable to stock up on food, specifically those who fall in the gaps of government-led responses.
- Support for workers, especially low-wage workers, to address lack of access to healthcare and paid sick leave, lack of proper safety equipment, economic impact of lost wages due to quarantines, cancelled activities, reduced hours/layoffs.
- Other emerging, immediate needs.

As we learn more about the impacts of the pandemic, priorities may change, but the overarching purpose of the Fund will remain the same.

Applications will be reviewed by a Grants Committee composed of at least three members of the Board of Community Foundation of Otsego County and at least three members of the public. The CFOC Board will approve recommendations of the Grants Committee. The Grants Committee will meet as needed, as will our Board, so we can respond quickly. At this time, grants will be issued only to existing nonprofit organizations serving and located within Otsego County. No applications will be accepted from individuals.

WORK TO BE DONE AND TIMING

We are organizing to make the Fund work smoothly. Specifically, CFOC is working to

- Create a website as a central location for all information
- Set up an on-line credit card donation process
- Create a grants committee, establish priorities and processes
- Create a public announcement plan to get the word out to the entire community.

We are operating with unpaid volunteers and will underwrite all development and administrative costs. CFOC will not charge any fees to the Fund.

We would like to announce the Fund as soon as possible. We would appreciate your quick response to our request for your endorsement, sponsorship, and contributions.

A resolution is being circulated today (Monday, April 6, 2020) for the CFOC Board of Directors to formally approve creation of the Fund, allocation of \$20,000 as an initial contribution to the Fund, and creation of a Grants Committee.

Please join us as we work as One Community – One County to defend ourselves from this pandemic.

Harry Levine
Board President
April 6, 2020