

Inside Philanthropy



The State of
American Philanthropy

Giving for the
Northwest

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ABOUT INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

Inside Philanthropy is a digital media site that covers the world of charitable giving. We report daily on foundations, major donors, and trends in philanthropy. Through our GrantFinder resource, we also profile and track thousands of funders working across key issue areas and geographic regions. Inside Philanthropy is supported by reader subscriptions and advertising. We do not receive funding from any other source. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com

ABOUT THE STATE OF AMERICAN PHILANTHROPY

The State of American Philanthropy is a series of background papers on important topics and trends in U.S. philanthropy. The papers draw on past research and reporting by IP writers, as well as new interviews, grantmaking data, and other sources. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com/state-of-american-philanthropy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northwest region of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming is one of the most philanthropically diverse in the nation, with tremendous regional growth surrounding cities like Boise, Portland and Seattle; an influx of new money into retiree and resort communities; as well as large, rural regions trying to hold onto their populations and reinvent their economies.

The philanthropic community is similarly partitioned, with newer large, nationally and internationally recognized funders. Based in cities, these funders are founded on wealth created through the technology sector, and are joining older family and corporate foundations built on the legacy of banking, energy and timber. There are also distinctions between funders with politically progressive grantmaking strategies centering on equity and more traditional place-based funders supporting “mainstream” education, health, arts and other civic organizations.

The philanthropic community of Alaska has some distinct features that merit special attention with respect to the relationship between Alaska Native and Tribal funders, large numbers of rural-serving community foundations, health conversion foundations and legacy family foundations that are often working together in pooled or strategically aligned relationships.

The Northwest has fewer healthcare conversion foundations than many other regions of the country, but the pace has accelerated in the last five years; healthcare conversion foundations are now present in every state in the region. This trend will likely continue over the next decade. The great unknown is how wealth imported by the newcomers to the region will evidence itself in the creation of new foundations or in the establishment of donor-advised funds at community foundations. There is a fear that newcomers will be slow to embrace philanthropic opportunities in their new states or communities.

Who's Giving

- Foundations that come from technology fortunes, like the Ballmer Group, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Micron Foundation, are all based in urban areas but have statewide funding interests.
- Large family funders like the Ford Family Foundation, M.J. Murdock Trust and the Rasmuson Foundation have long-term rural investment portfolios and local philanthropic leadership roles.
- Statewide community foundations like the Alaska Community Foundation, Oregon Community Foundation and the Wyoming Community Foundation have donors and grantmaking portfolios that encompass both urban and rural regions of their states.

Who's Getting

- Statewide alliances and collaboratives on a host of education, health and economic development issues are getting a lot of funder attention.

- Tribal and Alaska Native-led organizations are receiving considerable funding, along with other organizations led by people of color.
- Community and economic development efforts aimed at bringing together issue stakeholders in health, education, housing, workforce development, and parks and recreation are a key interest of funders across the Northwest.

The Big Issues and Funding Trends

- Education and health organizations are the largest recipients of philanthropic dollars in the region, but often through a distinctly equity-based lens.
- Substance abuse and addiction are of a great interest to both health and non-health funders responding to an environment of illicit drug use that is much higher in Alaska, Oregon and Washington than in other parts of the country.
- Conservation and the environment have an outsized presence in the philanthropic environment. This is fueled both by the presence of companies associated with the outdoors like The North Face, Patagonia and REI, along with numerous outdoor assets like the 10 national parks in the region. There is also growing funder interest in climate change.

Equity in the Sector

- A focus on equity is not new in the region, but has been accelerated by the presence of newer funders like Group Health Foundation in Washington.
- Funders like Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Idaho and the Pride Foundation have leadership roles on LGBTQ issues in what are often politically conservative environments.
- The Community Foundation of the Yakima Valley and the Rasmuson Foundation are examples of funders that are explicit about their interests in immigrants and indigenous communities.

The Northwest has several major cities with vast amounts of industry and wealth accumulation, and as a result, has growing philanthropic resources. Similar to other regions, philanthropy tends to be concentrated in metro areas. Nonetheless, the funders of the Northwest do seem to have a longer history of recognizing the special needs of rural areas and indigenous people, with major initiatives growing over the past decade.

The region has one element of a strong philanthropic infrastructure in Philanthropy Northwest, but the individual states that make up the region don't have the more localized philanthropic support organizations of many states with large populations and more established philanthropic communities. Philanthropy Northwest is a national leader in devoting strategic and financial resources to supporting the development of a rural philanthropic culture for the region.

Many of the urban and rural communities of the five states in this region are experiencing a major influx of newcomers, which may also provide philanthropic opportunities. This may take the form of accelerating investment in new issues and strategies with the establishment of donor-advised funds, for example, but may also provide a pool of new leaders for nonprofits and funding organizations.

Introduction

This State of American Philanthropy brief on giving in the states of the Northwest examines a region that is wildly divergent in demographics, culture, political leanings, and economic drivers – both within and between states. Not surprisingly, the current state of philanthropy in the region varies in a similar fashion, ranging from funders with very large, public national and international giving portfolios side by side with hyperlocal family foundations granting in ways that seemingly haven't varied for decades. The Northwest states included in this analysis are Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. Though Montana is sometimes discussed as a Northwest state, Inside Philanthropy groups it with Mountain States, along with Nevada, Utah and Colorado. Funders included here are both based in the region and have a local giving presence, as opposed to being based in the region but giving mostly outside of the region.

One of the chief factors influencing the type and styles of philanthropy in the Northwest is the existence of rapidly growing urban areas (Boise/Portland/Seattle) with lots of newcomers, juxtaposed with enormous rural geographies that are sparsely populated. These urban areas tend to experience philanthropy driven by wealth created from technology, while the rural areas are influenced by family and corporate interests associated with banking, energy and timber. Many of the larger funders have statewide or regional philanthropic service areas, but far fewer of their investments are made in their rural communities.

The reasons for the lack of investment in the rural regions of the states are many: (1) perceived lack of leadership and non-profit infrastructure, (2)

difficulty in achieving scale and (3) lack of board and staff knowledge about the rural regions. An exception to this is the intentional rural work of many Alaska funders who have helped spread philanthropy through the most remote parts of the state by establishing 11 community foundations and special grantmaking programs targeting rural Native Alaskan communities. Greater inclusion of indigenous and immigrant voices in grantmaking models is part of ongoing discussion in all five of the Northwest states.

The funding interests of grantmakers and donors in the region are not significantly different than in other parts of the country, with education and health being dominant. Interviews with funders revealed, however, a growing interest in issues not reflected in current giving statistics: issues like broadband, child care, housing and the future of the workforce. The importance of many of these issues has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that may shift giving patterns over time.

A frequently mentioned unknown in the Northwest is when and how the many newcomers moving into the region from other states will become part of the philanthropic community. In 2020, Idaho led the country in the proportion of people moving to a particular state versus moving out of the same state. While data is not yet available, funders believe that COVID-19 has accelerated movement into the region, with many more people now able to work remotely and wanting to live in less expensive, less dense areas. Will this increase the donor base of community foundations, for example?

Finally, the region is home to several healthcare conversion foundations. These foundations have been formed from the sale of nonprofit healthcare

or health insurance assets. Lacking shareholders, the sale proceeds are placed in an endowed foundation. Interestingly, the region has fewer of these foundations than other regions. The total across the five states is estimated at between eight and 12, in comparison to a similar multistate region of the southeastern United States, with 60 to 70 conversions. In 2021, Wyoming became the last state in the country to host a health conversion foundation with the endowment of the Wyoming Medical Center Foundation in Casper.

The Lay of the Land

Who's Giving

The diverse and dynamically changing communities across each of the Northwest states creates a challenge to match available giving data and current trends. As a whole, giving in the Northwest has been steadily increasing. By volume, urban Oregon and Washington are the powerhouses in Northwest giving; eight of the 12 largest Northwest givers are based in Portland or Seattle. Considering their smaller populations, Alaska, Idaho and Wyoming also have an influential and growing philanthropic presence.

Washington is the most populous state in the Northwest, with strong grantmaking platforms from private foundations like the Ballmer Group, founded by former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer and his wife Connie Ballmer, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Both large foundations make sizable grants serving their home state across issues like education and homelessness. The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center Foundation is a statewide foundation focusing on grantmaking in health and medical research. The Seattle Foundation in Washington is the largest community foundation in the Northwest region.

Other influential grantmaking institutions include the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, the Washington Research Foundation and the Norcliffe Foundation. Groups like the Legal Foundation of Washington and the Pride Foundation are issue-specific funders that support equity. The Pride Foundation is an innovative regional funder working across states with a focus on LGBTQ people and communities inclusive of rural places.

There are similarities in the landscape of giving for Washington and Oregon. Both Seattle and Portland are lively urban centers that have core giving power impacting the surrounding communities and the rest of the state. Like the Seattle Foundation in Washington, the Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) has a statewide scope and is a keystone of philanthropic funding in that state. The Meyer Memorial Trust, the Ford Family Foundation (unrelated to the more high-profile Ford Foundation headquartered in New York), and the Collins Foundation also support a broad range of needs across the state, including education, environment, housing, arts development and rural community development. Other funders on the Oregon giving scene include the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation, United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund, and the Abbey Foundation of Oregon. Individual donors Phil and Penny Knight, with a fortune derived from Nike, have also directed significant funds toward Oregon education and research, including a recent \$300 million gift to the University of Oregon.

Idaho and Wyoming are at the other end of the population spectrum in comparison to Washington and Oregon. Nevertheless, the philanthropic scene is vibrant and growing across both states. Corporate funder Micron Technology Foundation made a big splash in Idaho's philanthropic sector as a top funder, giving over \$52 million between 2014 and 2018. Founded in 1978 and based in Boise, Micron was initially a semiconductor design company and has since evolved into a high-power tech company in developing memory and information storage systems. Micron supports employee communities in Idaho with interests in science and technology education. The J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation is another powerful philanthropic

force, directing \$600 million toward youth support, parks and higher education in Idaho over a 10-year period. The Idaho Community Foundation, Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation, the Kissler Family Foundation, Harold E. & Phyllis S. Thomas Foundation also serve Idaho’s communities and address similar issues.

In Wyoming, local family foundations make up a sizable proportion of philanthropic giving, including the John P. Ellbogen Foundation, Robert S. & Grayce B. Kerr Foundation, Joe and Arlene Watt Foundation, Homer A. & Mildred S. Scott Foundation and George B. Storer Foundation. The Wyoming Community Foundation, one of only two community foundations in the state, is a leading grantmaker for Wyoming. The Community Foundation of Jackson Hole is another place-based funder offering grants of varying sizes and encouraging philanthropy programs for students. The Natrona Collective Health Trust (formerly the Wyoming Medical Center Foundation) is the first health conversion foundation in the Wyoming philanthropic landscape. The trust supports accessible health care in Natrona County.

Alaska is the “last frontier” and the largest state by area in the United States with the lowest population density. One of the largest funders in Alaska is the Rasmuson Foundation, a family funder with a statewide scope that granted over \$108 million between 2014 and 2018 and has granted an approximate total of \$750 million since its founding in 1955. Rasmuson’s funding areas are geographically and thematically broad, making grants to support museums and cultural heritage programs, rural health clinics and science centers. Other significant funders in Alaska include the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, the Mat-Su Health Foundation and the Alaska Community

Foundation. These large funders stay closely connected with smaller community foundations like the Golden Heart Community Foundation, the Kodiak Community Foundation, and Palmer Community Foundation to address the needs of isolated rural communities throughout the state.

10 Northwest Funders to Know	
Oregon Community Foundation	Portland, Oregon
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Seattle, Washington
Seattle Foundation	Seattle, Washington
Wyoming Community Foundation	Laramie, Wyoming
Ford Family Foundation	Roseburg, Oregon
United Way of King County	Seattle, Washington
Meyer Memorial Trust	Portland, Oregon
Idaho Community Foundation	Boise, Idaho
Rasmuson Foundation	Anchorage, Alaska
Alaska Community Foundation	Anchorage, Alaska

Who’s Getting

Like the largest grant recipients across other regions, Northwest grant recipients that receive the most private donations are often institutions that work to improve health and education.

Grantmaking institutions in the Northwest focus on funding issue-based programs while also supporting capacity-building for nonprofits. Across all issues, funders are forming initiatives, hiring staff, and devising grantmaking systems and collaborations with an increased focus on racial equity following the rise of the Movement for Black Lives. Minimizing disparities based on race, gender,

sexual orientation and economic standing is a common goal across funder programming and grantmaking.

In Oregon, Washington and Wyoming, education is by far the top priority for most foundations. Funders find creative strategies to support education systems and educational attainment for communities. For example, the Wyoming Community Foundation funds education through both statewide initiatives and smaller local grants. The John P. Ellbogen Foundation partners with community stakeholders, public groups and private organizations to implement joint education missions. Across all states, funders collaborate with public groups and grassroots organizations to address aspects of health, from encouraging women's interest in science and technology to rural food systems work.

After education, health and human services are the top funding areas across the Northwest. In hubs like Seattle, funders are supporting science and medical research, including large grants to Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research and Seattle Children's Hospital. In Washington and Oregon, homelessness and mental health are major focal points in funding. Funders of all sizes and types are also investing in solutions that advance equity and address health disparities across race and socioeconomic standing.

Community and economic development represent another key area receiving funder dollars in the

Northwest. Community development is a cross-cutting programmatic focus that brings together multiple issues, including housing, health, arts, real estate development, access to services and workforce training. Funders are consistently looking for the convergence of societal sectors; for example, home insecurity and education, culture and economic growth, childcare and education. By supporting intersectional solutions, funders can tackle an issue from several angles and make a larger impact on the community as a whole.

Rural development investments are another key area of community development, especially since a large geographic proportion of each of these Northwestern states is rural. Rural projects across all states are aimed at facilitating community development and economic opportunity. In Northwest states, funder initiatives in rural community development often overlap with issues faced by Native American and Indigenous communities. For example, in Alaska, approximately [80% of the rural population is Indigenous](#). Northwestern funders—Alaska funders especially—are leading the nation when it comes to the proportion of dollars allocated specifically for Native communities.

Arts and culture receive a much smaller proportion of funder dollars, in comparison to issues like health and education. When analyzed in a national context, it's interesting to note that a Grantmakers in the Arts [report](#) that listed the top 35 foundations

Funder Spotlight



The Roundhouse Foundation was launched in 2002 by the longtime chairwoman of Columbia Sportswear Company and her daughter. Foundation assets increased in 2019, and the organization widened its focus beyond the arts to environmental stewardship, education, social services and creative problem solving throughout Oregon's rural communities and Tribal Nations.

ranked by share of arts giving featured only one Northwest foundation—the Harold & Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation in Oregon.

However, the arts do represent an important issue for funders across the Northwest as a strategy for place-making and cultural revitalization and preservation. Arts and culture grantmaking is an opportunity to support diversity and share the history of marginalized groups, including Black and Indigenous Communities. Northwest funders fill many funding gaps for community arts, since public funding for the arts is generally restricted to state agency grants, with very little support for local arts groups. In general, most funder dollars for the arts flow from private and community foundations. However, interestingly, corporate funders play an important role in the Northwest on a community level.

Inside Philanthropy

August 2020 Survey

“If you aren’t the “in” charity, you have to move mountains to gain donors. Secondly, if you are in a state that does not have income or sales tax, and dependent on industries like oil and tourism, you are on the cutting block for funding. There’s not enough to go around when you are in a state that has less than a million people but so many are on public assistance. There are fewer dollars to go around and years ago state grants were commonplace. Now, there’s none.”

—Public Relations Officer, Anchorage, Alaska

The vast geography of untouched wilderness is a defining characteristic of many Northwest states. State residents and funders alike are interested in recreation, environmental protection, animals, sustainability, and national parks. This sentiment is particularly strong in Wyoming, Alaska and Idaho, each of which have a wide array of nature-focused

grant recipients, including national parks and recreation groups. The environment and recreation are among the top five funder priorities in these three states. The environment ranked fourth as a funding priority in Alaska between 2014 and 2018, receiving over \$106 million. Over the same period in Idaho, over \$155 million was allocated for the environment and sports/recreation, while Wyoming funders dedicated a whopping \$233 million toward the same causes. By contrast, environment and recreation are not included in the top funder priorities for Oregon and Washington.

Strengthening philanthropy and creating sustainable partnerships and funding systems are other interests for funders. Northwest funders are focused on creating systems that are culturally competent and responsive to community needs. Leadership training programs, workshops, technical support, capacity-building and convenings with communities are prioritized across affinity groups, community foundations and funder partnerships in the Northwest. For example, Philanthropy Northwest has recently held or has planned a number of events strengthening Native-led nonprofits, applying equity principles, and transparency and trust in philanthropy. The Oregon Community Foundation—the top giver for capacity-building grants in the region between 2014 and 2018 — launched a fund to support nonprofit infrastructure and streamline nonprofit operations for maximum impact.

Giving & Getting Deeper Dive

Education is the top focus for funders across the Northwest. In fact, between 2014 and 2018, Northwest grantmakers overall directed over \$1.5 billion more toward education than health. The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) has a multifaceted strategy for supporting education

across the state by partnering with regional foundations, nonprofits and local volunteer groups to support scholarships, STEM education programs, arts education, and early childhood education. The OCF recently launched the Oregon Black Student Success Community Network, bringing together 23 grassroots organizations and leaders across the state to address racial inequities in education.

The Wyoming Community Foundation (WYCF) has invested in the nonprofit Wyoming Afterschool Alliance in support of educational after-school programs, with a focus on encouraging participation in science and technology among girls. The Wyoming Women's Foundation is a fund at the WYCF and supports women's education, for example, funding child care while mothers pursue high school and college degrees. The John P. Ellbogen Foundation focuses primarily on education funding, with initiatives supporting early childhood, K-12 education, postsecondary education and teachers, while the Mary and Doc Robertson Trust for Handicapped Children is another education funder with interests that include children with disabilities.

Alaska funders maintain a focus on health and human services, with major recipients including crisis centers, family support programs and mental health support. Top Alaska grant recipients between 2014 and 2018 included Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation, Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, Catholic Social Services, and the Tanana Chiefs Conference. Investment in Native communities' needs is a focus across all funders in the Northwest and is particularly strong in Alaska.

The Rasmuson Foundation has been a major presence in Alaska for decades with a central focus on addressing the issues affecting predominantly

Native communities. The Rasmuson Foundation tackles issues related to community health, wellbeing and development with initiatives addressing dental health, housing, economic development and alcohol abuse. The Rasmuson Foundation, Mat-Su Foundation, Southcentral Foundation, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Providence Alaska, and the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services have formed a coalition to support the Recover Alaska initiative, which fights alcohol abuse. The program funds advocacy and journalism that raises awareness of alcohol abuse, media projects to celebrate recovery and discourage drinking among Alaska's youth, and research on alcohol regulations in Alaska.

Funder Spotlight



The Alaska-based Rasmuson Foundation has been supporting programs improving the lives of Alaskans since it was established in 1955. Primary areas of grantmaking focus include arts and culture, health, social services, housing, and the promotion of philanthropy. Arts and culture organizations generally garner the most funding dollars from the foundation with nearly \$8 million in grants awarded to related organizations in 2021.

Arts and culture grantmaking across the Northwest supports a vast array of programs through a variety of partnerships and funding networks. The Creative Advantage is an initiative in Washington that was launched in 2013 through a partnership between the Seattle Foundation, Seattle's Office of Arts & Culture, and Seattle Public Schools. These

funders collaborate with over 90 community-based arts groups to make arts education more accessible to students. A key focus of the initiative is ensuring that public school students throughout the Seattle area have equitable access to the arts, regardless of race, language, or economic status.

Although corporate funders are generally not major donors to the individual arts organizations, corporate funders like Microsoft and Starbucks in Seattle are primary donors to ArtsFund, a local fund that concentrates grantmaking on cultural efforts. Grantmaking supports groups like Asia Pacific Cultural Center, the Chinese Arts and Music Association, and the Seattle Latino Film Festival. Other major arts recipients of Washington funders include Seattle Art Museum, Flying Heritage and Combat Armor Museum. In Oregon, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Association and Portland Art Museum are among the 10 largest recipients of grantmaking. The Buffalo Bill Historical Center and the National Museum of Wildlife Art, both in Wyoming, receive a significant proportion of funder dollars. Located in Cody, Wyoming, the Buffalo Bill Historical Center includes museums and exhibits dedicated to Native American history and culture. The Center also supports the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls movement, which raises awareness of the exploitation of Indigenous women.

The Big Issues & Beyond

The funding community is grappling with the same big issues as all regions, such as increasing economic inequality, racial inequity (see Perspectives on Equity section below), funder grantee power dynamics and the like, but there are some issues that are particularly relevant in the Northwest.

Environmental Conservation and Climate Change.

The outdoors, recreation and conservation tend to secure a significant amount of funding from Northwest grantmakers. In Wyoming, top recipients are Grand Teton National Park, Grand Teton National Park Foundation, and the National Park Service. The Northwest is also a hub for the outdoor recreation economy. Well-known companies in outdoor recreation including Patagonia, The North Face, Kelty and REI established the Conservation Alliance to protect and conserve wild areas of the U.S. The alliance, from a structural perspective, can be viewed as a circle that partners with local and grassroots groups to protect the natural environment. Over 235 groups work together as part of the alliance, and in 2018 it gave \$1.9 million to support 55 projects. While the alliance works nationally, there is a focus on the Northwest, with recent grantees including the Alaska Wilderness League, American Whitewater in Seattle, Central Oregon Landwatch, Oregon Wild, and the Columbia Land Trust in Washington.

Advocacy Spotlight



Based in Seattle, Washington, the Alliance for Gun Responsibility is comprised of three separate organizations—a 501 (c)(4), 501 (c)(3), and Political Action Committee (PAC). The Alliance for Gun Responsibility and its foundation, research and implement methods to end the gun violence crisis in the communities they serve. Its PAC endorses firearm safety and responsibility candidates running for public office on the state, county and municipal levels.

Northwest foundations also support efforts to combat climate change and address the intersection between climate change and social justice. The Seattle Foundation has launched the Climate Justice Impact Strategy initiative to raise awareness of the disproportionate impact of climate change on minority communities and support climate justice solutions. The Meyer Memorial Trust's grantmaking also supports climate change and social equity. The Oregon Environmental Council is a 2021 grantee that works to provide clean water, a toxin-free environment, and climate change protection for disadvantaged communities.

Gun Safety. This issue is not evenly addressed across all Northwest states. In Washington, the Washington Alliance for Gun Responsibility supports restrictions and control in gun ownership, with significant financial support from tech moguls like Connie and Steve Ballmer, Paul Allen, Bill and Melinda Gates, and Nick Hanauer. This support for gun control contrasts starkly with philanthropy in Wyoming and Alaska. These states have the [second- and third-highest rates of gun ownership](#) in the country, a statistic reflecting the political culture and the importance of wilderness in these states. There are, however, smaller-scale projects aimed at making a difference in gun safety locally. For example, the Alaska nonprofit Maniilaq Association supports gun safety by raising awareness of safety protocols and gun lockers. These strategies are designed to prevent gun-inflicted suicide, which is [disproportionately high](#) among the Native population.

Ongoing Pandemic Ramifications. In 2020 and 2021, funders contended with the pandemic and related challenges, with a significant amount of funding directed toward response

efforts. COVID-19 has tested funders' adaptability and flexibility in providing timely support to desperate communities in need. The pandemic has further unearthed systemic inequities embedded within systems impacting health and wellbeing, with inequitable access to resources and services affecting communities across the country.

The combination of fundamentally inequitable systems and the pandemic resulted in staggering outcomes—the [CDC reports](#) that in comparison to white individuals, Native Americans, Asian, Black and Hispanic adults experience higher rates of COVID infection, hospitalization and death. Funder strategies for COVID-19 funding are usually two-fold: responding to immediate needs for healthcare and/or responding to the ripple effect on the economy and communities' livelihoods. While COVID-19 response is a large part of the puzzle, addressing deeply rooted inequities is another. Pandemic response efforts are short-term efforts, while equity work is ongoing.

Washington was the first state in the Northwest to mobilize resources and create a COVID-19 Response Fund. The Seattle Foundation—in collaboration with partners including Amazon, Starbucks Foundation, Microsoft and United Way of King County—established the Response Fund as a funder pool to provide both public health and economic support. The COVID-19 Response Fund had 1,700 donors who gave \$14.3 million by the end of March 2020. Similarly, the Idaho Community Foundation, United Ways in Idaho, and the Idaho Nonprofit Center collaborated to respond to community needs throughout the pandemic, coming together to give \$1.9 million to groups serving low-income and disadvantaged residents of Idaho.

Washington's Equity Relief Fund is an effort to support disadvantaged communities and address inequities highlighted by COVID pandemic. Across the Northwest, corporate funders, community foundations, health legacy foundations, private foundations and individual donors rolled up their sleeves and responded to the crisis at hand.

Grantee Spotlight



Recovery Cafe was founded in 2003 “as a direct response to the critical, unmet need for those who suffer on the margins—that of long-term recovery support.” Since then, it has received wide support from funders based in the Northwest including the Gates Foundation, which has awarded the organization nearly \$14 million in grants and the Seattle Foundation which has provided close to \$2 million in grants. Funding went toward the support of Recovery Cafe’s various substance use disorder treatment programs.

Substance Use. Drug abuse is another issue receiving significant attention and funding from Northwest philanthropy. Data from the [SAMHSA 2018-2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) shows that Oregon, Washington and Alaska have some of the highest rates of illicit drug use among individuals 12 and older. Foundations are addressing this issue by funding programs in advocacy, treatment, and recovery housing. The Rasmuson Foundation in Alaska is funding projects for addiction treatment, with examples like Sultana New Ventures in Anchorage and Set Free Alaska in Palmer. De Paul Treatment Centers in Portland, ShelterCare in Eugene, and Good Shepherd Ministries in Beaverton are grantees of the Oregon Community Foundation. Recovery Cafe in Seattle and Truly Motivated Transitional Living in Yelm

are recipients of Seattle Foundation grants to support substance use disorder treatment.

Inadequate Resources for Rural

Communities. Across philanthropy in general, rural America receives a lower proportion of funding dollars in comparison to urban areas, even when rural communities are often in the most need of support. Though this gap persists across the country, Northwest funders are making a concerted effort to direct more funding to address rural communities’ needs. Supporting rural community development, economic growth, and health are particular areas of focus for funders in the Northwest. The Ford Family Foundation primarily serves rural areas of Oregon through community and economic development projects. Growing Rural Oregon is a recent initiative launched to foster entrepreneurship in rural communities.

The sheer size of Alaska means that foundations often adapt their strategies to serve even the most remote corners of the state. The Alaska Community Foundation’s network of affiliate foundations are based in rural areas, including the Kenai Peninsula and Ketchikan Gateway Boroughs, and serve the local communities in these areas. The foundation’s Premera Rural Health Care Grant is designed to make healthcare accessible to the state’s rural communities. In addition to community foundation support for rural areas, corporate funders are also active in Alaska’s rural sphere. Corporate funder General Communication Inc., based in Anchorage, has launched a scholarship program designed to support individuals in rural Alaska. The RuRAL CAP Foundation—supported by Rural Energy Enterprises, Inc.—funds rural-serving Alaska nonprofits supporting community projects such as youth camps, civic participation and local government.

Funder Strategies & Trends

While much of philanthropy continues to operate without coordination with others, more Northwest funders are mobilizing and working together on a variety of issues, combining resources and delegating efforts to make maximum impact on their region. They also look to the future, funding innovative startups that advance both technology, health and community wellbeing, while also supporting leadership and infrastructure to help nonprofits make the most difference for the populations they serve. Supporting immigrants' needs is another key focus for Northwest funders.

Increasing funder collaboration. Collaborative efforts between large, statewide initiatives and smaller community-based funders help support better strategies for getting investments to local communities, especially in population-dispersed states like Alaska and Wyoming. The Affiliate Program is a collaboration between Alaska funders Rasmuson Foundation and the Alaska Community Foundation, and aims to strengthen philanthropy across Alaska communities. The program partners with and supports 11 community foundations throughout Alaska, including the Golden Heart Community Foundation, serving Fairbanks and the North Pole, and the Jessica Stevens Community Foundation, serving upper Susitna Valley communities. The program is designed to encourage donations, increase community member involvement and leadership, and develop endowment funds for community groups.

The Wyoming Nonprofit Network strengthens cohesion across stakeholders including foundations and nonprofits, businesses, public organizations and individual donors. The network also sponsors a number of small fundraisers to serve community organizations like the Laramie

County Library Foundation and the American Red Cross of Wyoming. Prizes for donations and platforms for giving challenges bring together Wyoming donors and celebrate the spirit of giving. The network has also launched a statewide giving day, and in 2021, 3,804 donors and 193 organizations raised \$2,383,967.

Initiative Spotlight



The Meyer Memorial Trust created the Justice Oregon for Black Lives Initiative in response to the protests of the “killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and others that have awakened a national movement to end systemic and structural racism.” The main goals of the initiative are to help at least 100 Black-owned businesses in Oregon earn \$1 million+ in revenue and to increase Black home ownership to 35% statewide by 2025.

Funding innovative startups. Investment in tech startups is another area of strategic philanthropy that represents a unique dynamic in the Northwest. Tech is a major part of the economic engine of the region, with significant influence and impact on the economy. Instead of competing with tech companies for investment, philanthropy works with them to broaden impact. Hopes are that early investments in tech startups and entrepreneurial endeavors will come full circle, resulting in more charitable giving down the road. Plus, startup companies give back to the state in the form of new jobs and creative energy.

The Oregon Community Foundation, for example, recognizes the importance of technological development for economic and philanthropic

growth, and since 2008, has given \$7.8 million to startups. The Washington Research Foundation also values venture capitalism and directs a significant amount of funding toward life sciences technologies that improve lives. One example of a startup grantee is Outpace, which uses protein design software and programming to develop cell therapy solutions.

The Oregon Community Foundation and Meyer Memorial Trust also contribute to the Oregon Angel Fund, which supports companies founded by individuals from disadvantaged groups. Green Zebra is a recipient of the Oregon Angel Fund and an example of a women-owned startup that supplies Portland food deserts with healthy grocery options.

Inside Philanthropy August 2020 Survey

“When COVID hit, many philanthropists pivoted to be the one to fund a vaccine, leaving nonprofits they once supported with less support right when they needed it the most. Continuing regular support for nonprofits with which funders have established a relationship is critical in hard times like a global pandemic.”

—Fundraiser, Anchorage, Alaska

Developing infrastructure and leadership. In addition to coming together in support of specific issues, foundations also strengthen philanthropy by supporting nonprofit infrastructure and leadership. The Statewide Capacity Collaborative (SCC) in Washington is a group of grantmakers including the Ballmer Group, Bernier McCaw Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Cedarmere Foundation, the Medina Foundation, Satterberg Foundation, Sherwood Trust and the Seattle Foundation. Capacity-building and leadership development for nonprofit organizations are the main goals of the SCC. Capacity-building support often entails providing

technical assistance and operational needs. The SCC began the Washington State Leadership Scan in 2016 to evaluate efforts in nonprofit leadership and determine what works. In 2017, the SCC launched an initiative for nonprofit leadership development.

Focusing on immigrants’ needs. The Meyer Memorial Trust, MRG Foundation, Collins Foundation, Oregon Community Foundation, and Pride Foundation have formed the Oregon Immigrant and Refugee Funders Collaborative to support immigrants and refugees throughout the state. This funding program is designed to respond to urgent needs and issues that immigrants are facing. The collaborative focuses on projects such as legal advice and representation, research on immigrants’ issues, basic human needs, and civic engagement. Grants are also directed toward immigrants’ COVID-specific needs, and aim to address the inequities affecting immigrants. Participating funders have put in place strategies and policies designed to be accessible in order to provide timely services for those in urgent need. For example, the collaborative uses a shared grant application form across all foundations and avoids funding cycles and deadlines, facilitating convenience and reducing wait times. A “no wrong door” policy means that grantseekers can contact any representative of the participating funder, who will then share the information and request with the rest of the team, thereby streamlining processes.

Perspectives on Equity

Foundations are increasingly making equity an underpinning of their missions and strategies, which in turn influences programming and funding initiatives. Another way funders are addressing equity is by ensuring that communities of color have a significant presence within foundation staff, reflected by new hires and

staffing models at the Group Health Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust and the Yakima Valley Community Foundation.

In Washington, the Alliance for Equal Justice is a collaboration of funders and advocates that facilitates civil legal support for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Members include the Legal Foundation of Washington, QLaw Foundation, Endowment for Equal Justice, Equal Justice Coalition, Seattle University School of Law Access to Justice Institute, the Public Law Library of King County, and the Race Equity and Justice Initiative. The alliance believes in a legal system in which poverty and race are not factors in the allocation of equitable legal services. The alliance promotes race equity training in leadership and works with partners to implement the State Plan for the Delivery of Legal Services to Low Income People.

The Seattle Foundation has established partnerships and spearheaded initiatives aimed at supporting Black-led groups. One example is Black Future Co-Op Fund. Founded by four Black women, the fund focuses on supporting Black communities by promoting connection and healing, empowering Black voices, creating wealth in Black families and encouraging a model of philanthropy that elevates Black culture.

The Seattle Foundation has also pledged to invest at least \$25 million over the next five years to Black-led groups around the Seattle area through the REPAIR (Racially Equitable Philanthropy Aimed at Initiating Reparations) program. The initiative is intended to recognize and address underinvestment in Black communities.

The Pride Foundation, headquartered in Seattle, is a community foundation that specifically supports

LGBTQ+ causes throughout the Northwest with a racial equity focus. Foundation initiatives are guided by a fundamental mission for equity for LGBTQ+ communities, with an emphasis on people of color who face discrimination based on both sexuality or gender identification, as well as race. The Pride Foundation emphasizes that the LGBTQ+ community is racially and culturally diverse, and inclusivity is a central goal. Community grant recipients include Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association, Greater Portland Trans Unity, and the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence. TRANSform Culture is an initiative aimed at supporting transgender and gender-fluid individuals by funding convenings, transgender training for businesses, and advocacy for transgender rights.

Grantee Spotlight



Pride Foundation

The Pride Foundation promotes and supports “transformational movements to advance equity and justice for all LGBTQ+ people in all communities across the Northwest.” Pride offers grant opportunities to organizations in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. It also receives wide financial support from area funders including the Paul G. Allen Foundation, the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation and the Northwest Area Foundation.

The Northwest United States is home to a large population of Native Americans, with Alaska having the largest proportion of Native American residents in comparison to other states. Nationally, funding for Native American causes and communities lags behind funding for other groups. While still far from representative, more Northwest philanthropic funding is directed

toward Native communities when compared to national funding directed toward the same projects. A 2019 Philanthropy Northwest [Report](#) found that in 2016, Indigenous communities received 1.5% of grant dollars, in comparison to 0.8% nationally.

Foundations in all the Northwest states are addressing Native causes on some level. The Potlatch Fund, a Native-led nonprofit group serving Washington, Idaho, Montana and Oregon, supports and advocates for tribal communities and their needs. The Potlatch Fund has established the Resiliency Fund, specifically supporting Native-led organizations in lifting their people through cultural preservation and community projects.

In the midst of the largest civil rights movement since the 1960s, foundations are striving to sustain this tide and address and challenge white supremacy step by step. Steven Cole-Schwartz of the Group Health Foundation says, “We are aiming to tell the true story of Washington and challenge white supremacist values.” Calls to action through conversations like Philanthropy Northwest’s virtual meeting, led by ChangeLab’s Scot Nakagawa and Western States Center’s Lindsay Schubiner, help to increase awareness of white nationalist ideologies that still persist in areas of the Northwest. Philanthropy must mobilize resources and continue to address white supremacy and white nationalism.

Movement Spotlight

**MISSING AND
MURDERED
INDIGENOUS
WOMEN &
GIRLS**

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) raises awareness of the thousands of Indigenous women and girls who go missing or are murdered every year. Though it has yet to gain widespread national funding, organizations such as the Alaska Community Foundation support the movement. Alaska is among the states with the largest numbers of MMIWG. In 2021, the Biden administration declared May 5, 2022 as Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day.

A Closer Look at States in the Northwest

Wyoming

With a population below 600,000, Wyoming is the least populous state in America and is characterized by beautiful, sprawling landscapes. The state's philanthropic landscape reflects this fact, often placing more emphasis on wildlife and the environment when compared to charitable giving in other states.

The Wyoming economy relies largely on natural resources, with strong industries in agriculture, coal, oil and forestry. The tourism and hospitality industries also generate wealth for the state, driven by Wyoming's scenic nature in Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park. Billionaires have relocated to Wyoming, drawn by both the state's natural beauty and absence of income tax. Jackson Hole, in particular, is home to some of the country's wealthiest people, including Hansjörg Wyss, Lukas Walton and John Mars. Wyss accumulated his wealth through the medical technology company Synthes, which he founded and sold to Johnson & Johnson. Wyss' philanthropy focuses on environmental concerns, and in the past, he has donated millions of dollars to purchase oil leases to protect lands from drilling.

As a result of the smaller population, Wyoming philanthropy tends to fly under the radar and is infrequently discussed nationally. However, philanthropy is thriving in Wyoming, albeit with a need for greater alignment and collaboration. The top funding recipients in Wyoming are in the education sector, followed by the environment, sports and recreation, human services, and arts and culture. While there are only two community foundations in the state, Wyoming Community

Foundation and the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole, they are two of the top five funders in Wyoming. Local family foundations also have a strong influence.

Wyoming's first health conversion foundation, based in Casper, has recently entered the Wyoming philanthropic scene. Originally established in 1977 as a nonprofit public charity, the Wyoming Medical Center Foundation became a nonprofit private foundation in October 2020 when Banner Health bought Wyoming Medical Center assets. The foundation's mission is to support accessible healthcare services across Natrona County.

10 Wyoming Funders to Know

McMurry Foundation

Community Foundation of Jackson Hole

Wyoming Community Foundation

Homer A. and Mildred S. Scott Foundation

John P. Ellbogen Foundation

World Foundation

Joe and Arlene Watt Foundation

LOR Foundation

Lynn and Foster Friess Family Foundation

George B. Storer Foundation

The Wyoming Community Foundation (WYCF) is one of the few funders with a statewide focus, although Micah Richardson, director of communications and programs, and Samin Dadelahi, chief operations officer, said, "We are working together more closely. We have recognized that we are a state with issues. Bringing in some

outside neutral partners around Medicaid expansion has helped us work together differently.” WYCF has particular interests in human services, education, arts and culture, the environment and health. WYCF grantee Edible Prairie Project supplies locally sourced food for people in need, while simultaneously supporting farms owned by women or minorities. During the pandemic, WYCF launched the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to address communities’ needs in the areas of senior services, child care, food and housing, and health.

The John P. Ellbogen Foundation is another funder with a statewide scope and initiatives focused on education. For example, the Wyoming National Board Certification Initiative is working toward higher rates of National Board Certification for Wyoming teachers. The Wold Foundation, established in 1985 and based in Casper, also directs grantmaking toward education initiatives and youth development programming. Other key funders, including the McMurry Foundation, the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole, and the Homer A. & Mildred S. Scott Foundation provide localized support across issues including arts, education and health.

The Scott Foundation, founded by Homer and Mildred Scott and based in Sheridan, focuses 70% of its grantmaking on Sheridan and surrounding communities within a 30-mile radius. Funding is often concentrated on youth support efforts such as character-building and arts and humanities. Economic growth, health and arts are additional funding priorities for the Scott Foundation. Recent grantees include Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Sheridan County, The Food Group, Habitat for Humanity of the Eastern Bighorns, and the Johnson County Family YMCA. Jenny Craft,

executive director of the Scott Foundation summarized the Wyoming culture as reflected in its philanthropy, “We are very much independent. We will help our neighbor, but we won’t ask for help. It’s all about relationships and giving back.”

The issues that Wyoming funders address align with key recipients. Education receives the most private philanthropy dollars. Key recipients include Teton Science Schools, the National Outdoor Leadership School, the University of Wyoming, and Northern Wyoming Community College District. Environment and sports and recreation are the next two issues receiving the most dollars from Wyoming funders, with major recipients including Grand Teton National Park, Casper Family YMCA and the National Park Service. Human services support is also a key issue. Magic City Enterprises in Cheyenne is a major recipient supporting adults with intellectual disabilities, while Sheridan YMCA and Casper Family YMCA provide services for youth, health and recreation. National Museum Wildlife Art and the Buffalo Bill Historical Center represent grantees in the arts and culture sector.

10 Wyoming Grantees to Watch

Grand Teton National Park

Magic City Enterprises

Sheridan County YMCA

Casper Family YMCA

National Outdoor Leadership School

National Park Service

National Museum of Wildlife Art

Buffalo Bill Historical Center

Jackson Hole Land Trust

Teton Science Schools, Inc.

Alaska

Nicknamed “the last frontier,” Alaska has the third-smallest population combined with the largest geographical area in the United States. Alaska also has the **highest proportion** of Native American residents, including Alaska Natives, in comparison to other states.

Alaska’s industry is dominated by rich reserves of natural resources. Oil, fishing, mining, agriculture and timber are major economic drivers for the state. In fact, oil revenues provide approximately 85% of Alaska’s budget. As in Wyoming, tourism is another industry that generates a significant amount of revenue for Alaska, with more than 1.1 million people visiting the state each year. Alaska’s wealthiest individuals are Jonathan Rubini and Leonard Hyde, who are individually worth \$310 million. Rubini and Hyde accumulated their wealth through their successful, joint-owned company JL Properties. Both are involved in philanthropy—Rubini serves on the board of the Alaska Community Foundation and Hyde serves on the board of the Alaska Museum of History & Art.

10 Alaska Funders to Know

Rasmuson Foundation

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Mat-Su Health Foundation

United Way of Anchorage

Alaska Community Foundation

Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation

Juneau Community Foundation

Arctic Education Foundation

Alaska Conservation Foundation

Homer Foundation

Philanthropy has traditionally lagged in providing ample support for Native-specific causes. A report by First Nations Development Institute evaluating community foundation grantmaking across 10 states found that approximately **0.15% of funding** was designated for Native American interests. This tide is turning in Alaska, with increasing Native-specific funding across Alaskan philanthropy and **10% of community foundation dollars** specifically directed toward Native causes. Diane Kaplan, president and CEO of the Rasmuson Foundation, says, “I suspect that a higher percentage of our grants are to Native communities and people than any other non-tribal funder in the US.”

One critical driving force behind this uptick in Native funding is Native representation in foundation leadership and on steering committees advocating for and directing funds toward the needs of Native communities. For example, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium is a Native-led tribal health organization and the second-largest giver in the state. The consortium partners with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services to support the Healthy Alaskans 2030 plan to improve health and health equity for the entire Alaskan population in addition to Native communities.

Alaska Community Foundation (ACF) is another funder that focuses efforts specifically on Native communities. ACF began the Alaska Native Social Justice Fund to provide targeted support to Native communities through programs for arts, children and women’s lives after incarceration. The Arctic Education Foundation focuses efforts and funding on educational attainment and maintaining traditional culture in Iñupiat communities in the North Slope region.

Grantmaking in Alaska also prioritizes education, human services, health, environment and public affairs. Another notable funder, the Rasmuson Foundation, is the top giver in Alaska. Swedish immigrants Jenny Olson and Edward Anton Rasmuson derived their wealth through growing the Bank of Alaska and they established the family foundation to give back to the state. A large proportion of grantmaking supports human services, with recent grantees including Abused Women’s Aid in Crisis, Access Alaska, Alaska Children’s Trust, Alaska Native Justice Center, and Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center.

Additionally, the Rasmuson Foundation says it uses strategic funding to bolster arts and culture “to build vibrant communities and preserve Native cultural heritage.” Rasmuson grantees in the arts sector include Museums Alaska and Alaska State Council on the Arts.

Energy comprises a significant portion of Alaskan economic activity, and philanthropy is subject to the ebbs and flows of energy pricing, energy policy and corporate strategies. Diane Kaplan of Rasmuson Foundation says, “We have lots of flux in the corporate giving sector right now. Corporate philanthropic presence has contracted significantly, and one major factor is changes in the energy industry.”

Alaska funders form partnerships and networks to support locally relevant projects more effectively. The Alaska Community Foundation and Rasmuson Foundation have partnered to form an affiliate program that supports 11 community foundations throughout Alaska. The Homer Foundation was the first established community foundation in the state and operates independently, though it still collaborates with larger funders like the Alaska Community Foundation.

Moreover, the Alaska community rallied in response to the pandemic. Prominent funders Rasmuson Foundation, the United Way of Anchorage, and the Alaska Community Foundation came together to launch the AK Can Do Fund to provide relief throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the donors giving to this fund, 60% were first time givers. Grantees of the fund included MyHouse and Senior Citizens of Kodiak, who support programs for homeless youth and meal services for the elderly.

10 Alaska Grantees to Watch

Anchorage Museum Association

Covenant House Alaska

Alaska Community Foundation

Southcentral Foundation

Alaska Conservation Foundation

Cook Inlet Housing Authority

Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium

Catholic Social Services

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Education, human services and health are the key issues receiving the most attention and grantmaking dollars in Alaska. Key recipients like Catholic Social Services in Anchorage and the Covenant House provide social support, shelter, employment guidance and youth enrichment programs for people in need. Because the state is so geographically expansive, funders and grantees focus on reaching communities in remote areas. The Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation is a grantee that focuses on providing healthcare services to 58 rural communities, while Tanana Chiefs Conference supports tribal communities

and provides health services for communities throughout rural central Alaska. Next to health and education, funders support organizations in the areas of environment and public affairs.

Idaho

Trends in charitable giving in Idaho are similar to those seen in Wyoming. The natural landscapes in Idaho make outdoor recreation activities popular among residents and funders alike. Large grants to the John Jackson Rock Climbing Team, as an example, highlight the heightened funder interest in outdoor recreation in comparison to that of funders in other states.

However, also in line with Wyoming's patterns, Idaho's philanthropic sector is expanding, and other issues are generating an increased amount of attention. Issues receiving the most funding from Idaho charities are education and human services, followed by community and economic development, environment, and sports and recreation.

Idaho's economy is driven by a diverse set of industries, including food production, natural resources and tourism. Idaho isn't just one of the top potato suppliers in the country, it also plays host to major technology company operations – Micron, Hewlett-Packard, and ON Semiconductor bolster economic growth across the state. Entrepreneur Frank VanderSloot is the one billionaire who calls Idaho home, and founded the Frank L. VanderSloot Foundation, funding human services and religion projects in Idaho and Utah. VanderSloot derived his wealth from Melaleuca, Inc., now an international company selling personal care items, environmentally friendly cleaning products, and nutritional supplements.

The corporate funder Micron Technology Foundation is the largest grantmaker in the state, supporting STEM initiatives, education and research, and strengthening the communities in which employees live. Micron supports K-12 teachers through workshops and lesson planning, funds microelectronics research at universities, and funds a summer camp for teens to encourage interest in science and technology. Micron also supports community programs in health, arts and education, with grantees including the Idaho Shakespeare Festival and Discovery Center of Idaho.

10 Idaho Funders to Know

Micron Technology Foundation

J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation

Community Action Partnership Association of Idaho

Idaho Community Foundation

Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation

Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health

Claude R. and Ethel B. Whittenberger Foundation

Lightfoot Foundation

John F. Nagel Foundation

Harold E. and Phyllis S. Thomas Foundation

The Idaho Community Foundation, like many other statewide community foundations, has regional advisory councils that better connect the foundation to the four distinct cultural regions of the state. Cara Nielsen, vice president of impact and engagement, says, "We have a level of connection to community. They call us to see how we can help." Like all the Northwest states, Idaho has enormous rural regions, and Nielsen says, "A large part of the state is rural, and that is both an opportunity and a

challenge.” The foundation has also made operational movements toward a trust-based philanthropy model with more general support grants and more grants fully funded per the application request.

The J.A. & Kathryn Albertson Foundation, Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation, Claude R. and Ethel B. Whittenberger Foundation, and John F. Nagel Foundation focus funding on education and community support. For example, the Nagel Foundation is a Southwest Idaho-focused funder that supports scholarships for Boise State University and the College of Western Idaho. Community grantees like Assistance League of Boise and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Idaho provide mentoring services and supply personal care supplies and clothing to low-income elementary school kids. The Whittenberger Foundation supports education in Caldwell County School District in Idaho by funding programs focusing on early childhood development, after-school learning experiences, and career planning.

10 Idaho Grantees to Know

Writers Theatre, Inc.

Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children

One Stone

Community Action Part

YMCA, Treasure Valley Family

Idaho Foodbank Warehouse

Idaho Youth Ranch

St. Luke’s Health Foundation

South Central Community Action Partnership

Wood River Land Trust

Idaho’s primary funding priority is education, followed by human services, community and economic development, environment, and sports and recreation. Grant recipients like the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children and Teach for America in Nampa work to improve youth development and access to quality education. Key recipients also support human services across the state. One Stone in Boise encourages high school students to engage in leadership training and projects that make a positive impact on their communities, while the Idaho Food Bank Warehouse in Meridian provides food distribution services and health and wellness education. Like all states in the Northwest, Idaho funders also direct significant funding toward sports, recreation and the environment. The Wood River Land Trust is a major recipient that works to preserve central Idaho landscapes, preserve wildlife habitats and support agriculture.

Washington

Washington state’s economy is dominated by life science and health research, aerospace manufacturing, and technology. Like other Northwestern states, Washington is rich in natural resources and strong in agriculture and forestry industries. Top funding priorities in Washington include education, health, human services, philanthropy and nonprofit leadership, immigration, and community and economic development.

Health and medical research have been a major focus of the philanthropic community in Washington, often spearheaded by massive grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center. For example, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center directs funding

to advance cancer research, COVID-19 research, and reduce health disparities.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is headquartered in Seattle and is focused on addressing both international projects as well as pressing issues right at home in Washington. Gates grew his wealth as a cofounder of Microsoft, and the Gates Foundation funds Washington groups that promote research, public health improvement, educational attainment, and social justice. In 2020, the Gates Foundation gave nearly \$10 million to Icosavax to develop and test a COVID-19 vaccine. In 2020, the Gates Foundation also funded a \$550,000 grant to the Rainier Valley Corps, a group based in Seattle encouraging social equity and supporting leaders and communities of color.

Corporate giants like Boeing and Starbucks also influence the philanthropic scene and address important issues in Washington. The Boeing Company was established in 1916 by Bill Boeing and has grown into the largest aerospace company in the world. Boeing has a massive impact on Washington as the state's largest private employer and through philanthropic endeavors that direct major resources to Washington communities' specific issues and challenges, including advancing racial equity, environmental protection and sustainability, support for veterans and military, and education and workforce development. Boeing also helps to cultivate rural school systems, notably through a \$100,000 grant for establishing STEM programming and career development in rural Snohomish County schools.

The Group Health Foundation is a statewide funder with a strong focus on health equity and healthy communities. GHF's Systems, Power, and Action grant program invests in organizations that are

committed to ensuring that public policies and institutions serve their communities, with grantees including the American Indian Health Commission for Washington State, Asian Counseling and Referral Service, and Family Crisis Network. The foundation is strong in its public commitment to equity. Steven Cole-Schwartz, vice president of programs, said, "We want to upend the narrative of who is a leader and who is important."

10 Washington Funders to Know

- Group Health Foundation
- Seattle Foundation
- Washington Research Licensing Foundation
- United Way of King County
- Norcliffe Foundation
- M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust
- Wayne D. and Joan E. Kuni Foundation
- Paul G. Allen Foundation
- Satterburg Foundation
- Legal Foundation of Washington

Both mental health and homelessness are issues that have received growing attention from Washington funders. Washington has seen a **6% increase** in homelessness between 2019 and 2020, three times the national increase of 2%. The Seattle Foundation, the largest Pacific Northwest community foundation, funds initiatives that address mental illness and homelessness. The Paul G. Allen Foundation focuses on similar issues by funding housing for homeless youth and families and supporting arts and culture programs for youth.

Starbucks is another huge corporation making a difference in Washington through its charitable

giving programs. Starbucks has recently committed to giving \$500,000 this year to address homelessness, including partnering with the We Are In initiative to increase affordable housing, bolster mental health services, and address racial inequities contributing to homelessness in King County, Washington. Starbucks is also committed to providing access to basic needs utilities like laundry, showers, bathrooms and food.

10 Washington Grantees to Watch

Seattle Children’s Hospital

Tondo Foundation

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

United Way of King County

Community Foundation for Southwest Washington

Plymouth Housing Group

Seattle Art Museum

Building Changes

Seattle Foundation

YMCA of Greater Seattle

Equity and social justice are at the forefront of Washington philanthropy. The Legal Foundation of Washington’s mission is to achieve civil justice for low-income communities through initiatives like Race Equity Grants, the Washington Immigrant Relief Fund, and COVID-19 Response Grants. The Legal Foundation of Washington and dozens of nonprofits and other organizations across Washington state have formed the Alliance for Equal Justice to provide legal services and aid to low-income and marginalized populations. The Satterberg Foundation supports social justice through initiatives like the Seattle Equity Summit and grants to nonprofits working for the rights of

immigrants, the LGBTQ community, the homeless community, BIPOC communities, and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

Key grant recipients are responding to the pressing issues facing the Washington population.

Education, health and human services are the primary interests of Washington funders. There are some notable examples of working across issues and systems: The Plymouth Housing Group is dedicated to addressing the root causes of homelessness; Building Changes addresses the overlap between housing, education, health and equity. The United Way of King County is another grant recipient committed to breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness by working to dismantle systemic racism and supporting educational attainment. Support for philanthropy is another major area of funding, with significant funders like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation providing operating support grants to smaller community foundations.

Oregon

Oregon philanthropy focuses on education as a leading priority, followed by health, human services, community and economic development, and arts and culture. Across many funding initiatives, equity plays a central role. The economy of Oregon is driven largely by technology companies, energy companies, agricultural exports and outdoor recreation companies.

Portland General Electric is an electric company that has a significant philanthropic presence in the state. The giving branch of the company, Portland General Electric Foundation, is dedicated to supporting more sustainable and stable communities, fostering creative expression and encouraging education. The foundation recently

launched Project Zero, geared toward providing Oregon children with skills to protect the environment and address climate change.

The Meyer Memorial Trust, the Ford Family Foundation and the Collins Foundation have had a strong philanthropic presence in Oregon for decades. The Meyer Memorial Trust is based in Portland and provides funding for initiatives serving Oregon and Southwest Washington. In 2016, the trust established equity as an underpinning of all projects. Grantmaking is centered on education, housing, environment, community development and supporting people of color and people living in poverty.

Based in Roseburg, Oregon, the Ford Family Foundation is a leader in rural philanthropic strategy and gears grantmaking toward rural communities across the state. Areas of interest include children, education, community development, arts and economic growth. The Vital Rural Communities program supports community-building and economic development efforts by funding projects such as convenings, civic engagement, community data collection, childhood programming, and school programs.

The Collins Foundation, founded by E.S. Collins' family members in 1947, is another strong presence in the private foundation arena in Oregon. Based in Portland, the Collins Foundation funds projects across the state, addressing issues such as affordable housing, food access, environmental protection, and rural development. The Initiative for Small & Culturally-Specific Organizations is a funding program supporting small, minority-led organizations that are addressing inequities in their communities.

The Oregon Community Foundation has also become a key player in statewide funding, with initiatives in education, health, community engagement, economic vitality and the arts. The OCF analyzes the charitable giving of Oregon residents, with 2019 reports showing that Oregonians have been donating at lower rates compared to Americans overall. In response, the OCF launched the OCF Leadership Fund to fuel and support philanthropy practices, outreach, and ensure that funds address the most pressing issues.

Based in Portland, the Autzen Foundation uses grants to support smaller nonprofits throughout the state with the mission of strengthening Oregon communities and making Oregon a better place to live. The Autzen Foundation supports social services programs, housing, food distribution and youth programs, especially for vulnerable populations.

10 Oregon Funders to Know

Oregon Community Foundation

Meyer Memorial Trust

Ford Family Foundation

Knight Foundation

Colins Foundation

James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation

Doernbecher Children's Hospital Foundation

United Way of Columbia-Willamette

Roundhouse Foundation

Autzen Foundation

The Roundhouse Foundation, based in Sisters, is all about “supporting creative thinking.” In addition to grantmaking programs in Arts & Culture, Environmental Stewardship, Social Services, and Education, the foundation operates a working ranch and timber tract for arts and agriculture programming. Erin Borla, the executive director, is clear about the positioning of the foundation as a community supporter and risk taker, saying, “We don’t want partners to be afraid to share mistakes and challenges - that’s where we all learn.” Similarly, the foundation has a strong commitment to connecting with its rural communities in ways that are culturally competent. “We have to be listening on both sides of issues. We work on being mindful of our language. Our goal is to build relationships and trust with grant partners and sometimes that means we don’t talk about things like they might in Portland or larger communities,” Borla says.

Funders have also come together in support of immigrants, forming the Oregon Immigrant and Refugee Funders Collaborative. A 2016 report from the Oregon Center for Public Policy found that undocumented residents in Oregon pay approximately \$81 million in taxes that support the state’s schools and economy. Oregon funders came together to establish a partnership for creating funds in support of strong, inclusive communities for immigrants.

Oregon funders make grants to organizations addressing the top three issues of health, human services, and community and economic development. Social services groups receive significant funding from Oregon foundations, with grantees like Bethlehem Inn and New Avenues for Youth addressing youth support, homelessness and hunger. Funders also work to address community

and economic development by funding grantees such as the Vocational Development Foundation, which provides opportunities and guidance for disadvantaged populations to secure employment. Though receiving a smaller proportion of grant dollars than other issues, philanthropic arts and culture projects are thriving in Oregon. Grantees like the High Desert Museum, Oregon Coast Aquarium, Portland Art Museum and the Shakespeare Festival Association contribute to a lively cultural scene throughout the state.

10 Oregon Grantees to Watch

Vocational Development Foundation

Oregon Community Foundation

Stand for Children Leadership Center

Johnson Charitable Trust

Oregon Shakespeare Festival Association

Bethlehem Inn

Young Life Washington Family Ranch
Wildhorse Canyon

Portland Art Museum

Providence Health and Services Oregon (dba
Providence St. Vincent Medical Center)

New Avenues for Youth

A Closer Look at Funder Types of the Region

Private Foundations

The Northwest has a long legacy of family foundation presence going back to wealth created from banking, energy and timber, as examples. Family foundations were the dominant grantmakers in the region until the growth of large community foundations in the 1980s and 1990s and the establishment of healthcare conversion foundations starting in the mid to late 1990s and continuing through today. Wyoming is still dominated by large numbers of local family foundations that are perhaps not large in size compared to funders in the other Northwest states, but still exert a great deal of philanthropic influence over the primarily rural regions of the state.

The Ford Family Foundation, based in Roseburg Oregon, was established in 1957 by Kenneth and Hallie Ford. The foundation prioritizes children and youth, postsecondary education, economic vitality and community development. Rural community and economic development are also key areas of interest for the Ford Family Foundation. The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, based in Seattle, is the legacy of the late Paul G. Allen, co-founder of Microsoft. While much of their interest is engaged beyond the Northwest in issues like climate and oceans, the foundation was an active participant in local and regional COVID-19 grantmaking programs.

The Norcliffe Foundation, founded in 1951 by Paul Pigott, has a strategy that is counter to current funder trends of large investment in major initiatives over multiple years. 60% of Norcliffe's grants are under \$15,000. Even with a host of smaller grants, the foundation's annual giving is in

the \$25 million range over its 110-county Puget Sound region, ranking it among the top 10 Washington funders. Norcliffe's endowment comes from Pigott's leadership in major rail car and steel manufacturing facilities.

Health conversion foundations in the Northwest are to be viewed as funders interested in a far wider spectrum of issues than the provision of healthcare services. The Northwest Health Foundation funds initiatives in Oregon and southwest Washington to support the broad health and wellbeing of communities in these areas. The foundation focuses on health equity, and aims to improve disability justice, support BIPOC communities and advance education. It also uses its leverage to connect local organizations with influential government leaders to increase awareness of community problems and provide a platform for grassroots groups.

Empire Health Foundation, based in Spokane, Washington, supports healthy communities in eastern Washington. Initiatives center on healthy aging, the health of Native American communities, preventing childhood obesity, strengthening families, forming meaningful partnerships, and enhancing capacity of the area's nonprofits. Other Washington health conversion foundations include Chuckanut Health Foundation and Verdant Health Commission.

Philanthropy in Alaska and Wyoming is also influenced by health conversion foundations. The Mat-Su Health Foundation based in Wasilla, Alaska, partners with nonprofits, tribal groups and government organizations to promote health and wellbeing in surrounding communities. The

Wyoming Medical Center Foundation in Casper is Wyoming's first health conversion foundation and supports accessible healthcare for all residents.

Leadership Spotlight: D'Artagnan Bernard Caliman



D'Artagnan Bernard Caliman is the director of the Justice Oregon for Black Lives initiative at Meyer Memorial Trust. The initiative advances racial equity by supporting Black causes and leadership. Caliman was raised in the Albina area in Portland, and his experience as a Black man living in a Black community shaped his career pursuits. He has a master's degree in social work from Portland State University, established the Rites of Passage program at the Portland House of Umoja, and has held leadership positions at the Child Welfare Information Gateway's digital web services team and Building Changes. Caliman is committed to using his skills and experience to advance racial equity and work toward dissolving systemic racism.

Corporate Funders

Major corporate givers are influencing the philanthropic sector across all five Northwestern states. In general, the corporate philanthropy community of the region is distinguished by an especially large proportion of corporations that have been founded in the past 30 to 40 years.

In Washington, Microsoft is an influential giver with a focus on issues in the Northwest, including homelessness, rural development, food insecurity

and racial inequities. Microsoft also funds large medical research projects at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, one of the top grant recipients in Washington. Starbucks and Boeing are two other major corporate funders in the Northwest. Amazon is a huge corporate entity with headquarters in Seattle. Its charitable giving arms, AmazonSmile and the Amazon.com, Inc. Contributions Program, focus their funding on Washington and Oregon. Amazon's areas of interest include STEM education, housing equity and hunger. One significant project is a \$100 million grant to the Washington nonprofit Mary's Place to open a shelter and health clinic serving Washington's homeless population.

The landscape and wealth of natural resources in the Northwest have given rise to successful oil and energy companies that provide charitable donations in their communities. The oil and gas industry has played an important role in the Alaskan economy and communities by creating jobs and funding a range of nonprofits. The Arctic Slope Regional Corporation is a network of six businesses that engages in construction, petroleum refining and energy support, while also supporting the economic and cultural interests of the Native communities in the region. The corporation has established the Arctic Slope Community Foundation and the Arctic Education Foundation, and gives to groups like the Alaska Native Heritage Center and the Alaska School Activities Association.

Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation is one of the top corporate givers in Alaska philanthropy, supporting economic growth for communities in the Norton Sound, the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. For example, the corporation launched its Small Business Initiative to support entrepreneurs and businesses that sustain economic

growth in the area. Alaska Airlines is another corporate funder with interests in supporting career growth, education, and equity for young people through the LIFT grants program. The Bristol Bay Native Corporation also has a strong giving presence in Alaska, focusing on bolstering shareholders' communities through Alaska Native cultural preservation, social services and support, education, and employment guidance and training.

In Oregon, Portland-based NW Natural (previously known as Northwest Natural Gas Company) funds more than 150 community groups and nonprofit organizations across issues like youth support, health and human services, the environment and the arts. NW Natural also has several programs and initiatives to address homelessness, encourage education and careers in energy, support leadership development, and fight human trafficking.

Nike is another high-profile corporate funder based in Beaverton, Oregon, with a significant giving presence in the Northwest. Nike's Corporate Giving Program and its Community Impact Program are designed to support the communities in which its employees live. The Corporate Giving Program has been active in promoting social justice causes, partnering with Built Oregon to support Black entrepreneurs in Oregon through a \$250,000 grant. The Rosewood Initiative, based in Portland, is another grantee that works to support social services and economic development in Black communities.

Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health is a private foundation, with key initiatives including rural health, behavioral health for children, healthcare innovation, and prevention of childhood obesity. The foundation supports communities across the entire gem state, making it important to

form partnerships with local organizations and adapt to individual communities' needs. Executive Director Kendra Witt-Doyle says, "How you approach the work depends on where you are with different cultures in different cities and different parts of the state." She adds, "We need to meet stakeholders where they are."

The Micron Foundation in Idaho directs funding throughout the state, particularly toward education initiatives. Funding is concentrated in the communities where employees live, which is in the Boise area. Micron funds education by supporting teacher workshops, real-world training for students, microelectronics research in universities, and science and technology camps.

Corporate Funder Spotlight



Blue
Cross of Idaho

Foundation
for Health, Inc.

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation of Idaho has rapidly expanded its staff over the past five years and is elevating issues of equity for LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities in a politically conservative state. It also leads work on social determinants of health from a unique statewide funder position.

Community Foundations

Community foundations make a significant impact across the Northwest, partnering with local stakeholders and responding to the needs of communities with geographic and demographic specificity.

Established in 1946, the Seattle Foundation is the top giver among Washington community foundations. Other locally focused community foundations in Washington include the Community Foundation of Snohomish County,

Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, Community Foundation of South Puget Sound, the Skagit Community Foundation, and the Yakima Valley Community Foundation.

The Yakima Valley Community Foundation serves the communities of the rural Yakima Valley in Washington, prioritizing education, health and wellbeing, and civic vitality. Sharon Miracle, the president and CEO of the Yakima Valley Community Foundation, says, “We have a severe housing shortage here. It will take a long-term commitment from private and public funders and leaders.” She also notes that the communities in the foundation’s area of service are characterized by gaps in wealth and opportunity. “We are a community of haves and have-nots. We have multigenerational agriculture families of great wealth side by side with the lowest adult educational levels in the state.” The Yakima Foundation has also been making changes to advance equity in order to better serve Yakima communities. Miracle says, “We choose the best candidate, but we are very careful to make sure our pool of candidates, as well as our team interviews are reflective of our community and the result is three of our four hires this past year are bilingual Latinx.”

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“Philanthropy professionals with big organizations are giving lip service to social justice issues without actually advancing any causes. Smaller groups and non-traditional/unofficial groups that are doing the work in their communities are prioritizing social justice in a way that is actually making progress. (large charities setting up committees to explore issues of racism vs small groups protesting school boards.”

—Fundraiser, Portland, Oregon

The Alaska Community Foundation recently launched a fundraiser to support nonprofits and community projects across the state. The fundraiser was able to raise \$100 million from private donors for nonprofits throughout the state. The Alaska Community Foundation supports a number of causes relevant to the communities it serves, including conservation, arts and culture, and family support. The foundation is also dedicated to supporting philanthropic infrastructure throughout Alaska with the Philanthropy for Alaska Fund, which supports capacity-building, and the Affiliate program, which supports smaller community foundations in remote areas throughout the state.

The Wyoming Community Foundation, based in Laramie, addresses community needs across the state in areas like childcare, education, and women’s support. In an interview with Chief Operating Officer Samin Dadelahi and Director of Communications and Programs Micah Richardson, Dadelahi said, “We love Wyoming and feel passionate about giving back to the state” and that “much of philanthropy is very local and doesn’t extend outside the community or county boundaries. It is siloed.” The top three program areas receiving funding in 2020 were human services, public and societal benefit, and education, followed by the arts and health. The foundation has also been evolving in terms of how issues are identified and addressed, with a growing awareness of inequities and disparities. Dadelahi described how “funds are being created for DEI. This is new!”

Major Donors

Giving in the Northwest is characterized by an entrepreneurial spirit, with high-profile business pioneers like Jeff Bezos, Harriet Bullitt and Gary Rubens having outsized philanthropic influence.

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, with a net worth approaching \$200 billion, has pledged \$13 billion in investments for initiatives addressing climate change, homelessness and education, though his overarching philanthropic goals, strategies and attention to the region are less clear. Bezos has established the Bezos Day 1 Fund, which backs organizations providing support and shelter for families. Northwest grantees include the Covenant House Alaska, Portland Homeless Family Solutions, in Oregon, and Building Changes and Africatown International, in Washington. Mackenzie Scott is Jeff Bezos' ex-wife and is worth about \$33 billion (as of May 2022). She is known for her massive giving, donating a significant proportion of her funds to a variety of mostly progressive issues including racial justice, gender equality, climate change, science and medicine, and economic development. While her giving is mostly national and international, she has also given major sums in the Seattle area, especially to local Habitat for Humanity work.

The late Harriet Bullitt was an entrepreneur and philanthropist who established the Icicle Fund in support of environmental preservation, arts and history in Washington. Gary Rubens is a self-described serial entrepreneur with philanthropic interests in STEM education and youth opportunities. Nike Founder Phil Knight calls Oregon home, and established the Knight Foundation, based in Beaverton, Oregon. In 2020, Knight gave over \$900 million to the foundation, with significant funding directed toward the University of Oregon.

Intermediaries & Associations

Funders throughout the Northwest are highly collaborative and dedicate significant resources to maintaining a sustainable philanthropic infrastructure. While large funders have the

financial power to make large-scale impacts, they rely on partnerships with local organizations for implementation on a community level. Affinity groups, partnerships and coalitions allow for more community-specific responses, effective pooling and distribution of resources, connections and strategy sharing, and ultimately, greater impact.

Major Donor Spotlight: Harriet Bullitt



Harriet Bullitt's mother Dorothy founded KING broadcasting in the 1940s, which Harriet later sold to endow the Bullitt Foundation. Since 1992 Bullitt has awarded over \$200 million to support environmental and conservation causes. In 2019, the foundation announced its plans to sunset its grantmaking by 2024. Harriet Bullitt passed away in 2022.

[Philanthropy Northwest](#) is a regional philanthropy-serving organization that provides networking and funder learning opportunities, while also partnering with other institutions to provide grants. For example, Philanthropy Northwest and the Washington State Department of Commerce partnered to provide \$11.85 million to fund more than 300 community nonprofits with BIPOC leadership serving BIPOC communities. Under the umbrella of Philanthropy Northwest, there are several affinity groups and convenings that bring together funders with common interests, including

the Racial Equity Funders Table, Healthy Philanthropy Partnership, and the Washington Philanthropist Forum.

Grantmakers of Oregon and Southwest

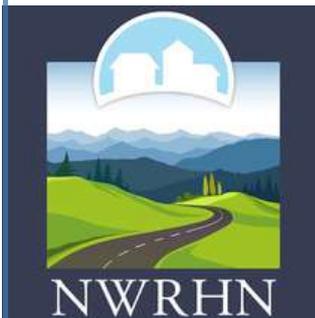
Washington is a philanthropy-serving organization that brings together regional funders to promote communication, sharing strategies, and connection. Convenings bring to light issues in the region, including homelessness, youth development, immigrants' needs, and healthcare in BIPOC communities. Conversations also cover effective philanthropy, grantmaking strategies, equity workshops, and trust-based philanthropy.

Collaborations are also particularly important for addressing rural issues. Across the Northwest, there are funder alliances that specifically address rural issues. The Alaska Community Foundation and the Rasmuson Foundation created an alliance that strengthens smaller foundations throughout the state and supports community-based rural development. In rural Idaho, communities face

health disparities including higher rates of suicide, heart disease, and low birth weights. The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health spearheads a rural health initiative in which the foundation gathers research and statistics and partners with local organizations to identify issues and relevant solutions.

The Northwest Rural Health Network is a coalition bringing together 15 eastern Washington rural health systems that work together and merge resources to improve rural healthcare services and operations. The Washington State Flex Program and the Office of Rural Health Policy and Rural Network Grant Program have been major supporters of the collaboration. Microsoft's Airband Initiative is a collaboration that addresses rural issues on a larger scale. The Initiative brings together organizations to improve rural broadband internet. One key partnership is the connection with Native Network to bring broadband access to tribal communities in parts of the Northwest.

Association Spotlight



The Northwest Rural Health Network (NWRHN) “shares resources and collectively supports rural health systems to develop integrated models of care.” Structured as a nonprofit LLC, NWRHN is currently comprised of 15 rural health systems in eastern Washington state. Members include Columbia Basin Hospital, Coulee Medical Center, Odessa Memorial Healthcare Center and Whitman Hospital and Medical Center.

An Analysis of Opportunities & Challenges

In conversations IP had with experts on the region's philanthropy, one of the strengths they cited could also be viewed as a challenge: The funders and donors in the Northwest are recognizing that their rural communities require intentional focus to be effective partners and grantees. The PSO for the region, Philanthropy Northwest (which also includes Montana), is a national leader in devoting strategic and financial resources to support the development of a rural philanthropic culture for the region.

The Northwest region is home to over 275 federally recognized tribes with concentrations in Alaska and Washington. Northwest funders are increasing their focus on tribal engagement with many examples coming out of COVID-19 grantmaking programs. This focus on Tribal work reflects a broader commitment to equity, even in some of the most politically conservative parts of the region.

Experts also named several challenges for the region's philanthropic community. Among the most frequently mentioned was sustaining the new funder relationships coming out of COVID-19 pooled funding. With the exception of Alaska, there has not been an established, ongoing culture of intentional funder collaboration and partnership—either within local communities or on a statewide basis. Partly, this may reflect the existence of many hyper-local, geographically bound family foundations, or perhaps the lack of state-specific funder groups in some states. Newer collaborations and partnerships described in the Intermediaries & Associations section also provide hope for increased alignment.

Despite the enormous expanse of land comprising the Northwest states, there is little funder leadership on issues of transportation—whether directly related to healthcare access or larger systemic issues like current and future workforce. The transportation issue also impacts the ability of older adults to age in place in many parts of the region. There does not appear to be a great deal of funder leadership on these and related older adult issues.

Working with other sectors was also cited as an important opportunity for philanthropy in the region. As in many other parts of the country, funders are assisting local communities in accessing and using sources of federal funding provided as part of the national COVID response, and could do more in this regard. There are ongoing discussions in the philanthropic communities in all the states of the region, but no model has yet emerged that would define a specific funder role.

The funders of the Northwest are ahead of many other regions of the country in recognizing the opportunity to play key convening and support roles for communities to acquire and enhance broadband availability. Philanthropy Northwest hosts a multistakeholder broadband working group that has recently issued a guide for funder participation in the issue.

COVID-19 prompted Alaskan funders to share resources in new ways, including a promising loaned program officer model that was able to accelerate the review of grant submissions and shared learning in ways previously not thought possible. The implications for this kind of

structured shared learning are profound, and go well beyond the occasional phone call from one foundation program staffer to a coequal at another funder. How can shared resources, for example, shared evaluation resources, become a model for tactical funder collaboration around the country?

An influx of newcomers into many of the urban and rural communities in the five states may also provide opportunities. This may take the form of accelerating investment in new issues and strategies with the establishment of donor-advised funds, for example, but may also provide a pool of new leaders for funder boards and staff.

One additional relevant thread was identified by experts IP interviewed: The economies of at least two of the states in the region, Alaska and Wyoming, are constantly subject to the ups and downs of the energy markets and the related federal policies. Funders are experiencing demands for support of basic systems like K-12 education. This may effectively sideline longer-term philanthropic strategies and investments such as equity, for example.

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“Smaller donors are shifting to cash-app transactions and mutual aid, filling gaps that exist for people that aren't helped by traditional charities.”

—Fundraiser, Portland, Oregon

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Feedback?

The State of American Philanthropy is an ongoing project. Each SAP brief will be updated periodically to integrate new information, additional data and evolving perspectives. This brief was originally posted to Inside Philanthropy in May 2022. It has not yet been updated. If you have comments or information you'd like to share with us, please email us at managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.com.