As of January 6, 2021, 26,723 people in Pierce County have tested positive for COVID-19. 312 of our Pierce County neighbors have died due to COVID-19.

In 2020, the Aligned Philanthropies and donors of PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED distributed $6.2 million to 174 organizations and entities providing services to address urgent needs and the disruption of basic human services to Pierce County’s most vulnerable populations due to COVID-19 and the necessary public health measures to address it.

Together, we have learned valuable lessons about what our community needs and philanthropy’s role under crisis conditions.

An Aligned Philanthropic Response

Total Contributed
$7.5M

Total Funding Requested to
$20M+

Total Funded
$6.2M

Total Recipients
174

Total Grants
227


That day, United Way of Pierce County and Greater Tacoma Community Foundation (GTCF) partnered for an aligned philanthropic response to emerging community needs.

Together, they launched PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED.

PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED isn’t just a pooled fund.
“Aligned Philanthropy” means that many different players in the community came together to contribute to advocacy, communication, and rapid response funding consistent with their missions and in support of needs in our community.

GTCF seeded the fund with $750,000 and then put down $1 million in matching funds. Philanthropies and donors across the region joined in the response, bringing the fund total to $7.2 by early June.

Although there were many unknowns as the pandemic hit, several key areas of need were obvious from the beginning. Broadly, childcare for first responders and essential workers, food access, and shelter and housing were identified as the central focus of the fund. However, the funding committee recognized that needs would evolve. They organized funding guidelines to be responsive to the changing situation.

Equity is a central value for PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED (PCC).

Funding decisions prioritize organizations supporting and serving communities most vulnerable to COVID-19 and its impacts.

COVID-19 harms some Pierce County populations more than others

The cumulative COVID-19 rate among Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) residents is **3 times higher** than the white, non-Hispanic rate in Pierce County. NHOPI cases account for 4.9% of total cases compared to 1.6% of the county population.

Rates among Hispanic, Black and Native American residents are about **1.5-2.5 times higher** than the rate among white, non-Hispanic residents.

Evidence suggests people who earn less money, are less educated, or have limited ability to speak English are at higher risk for COVID-19.

Data from the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department COVID-19 Dashboard

PCC’s funding request process was designed to present as few barriers as possible to nonprofits to focus their energy. As a result, many smaller and emerging nonprofits with trusted relationships in diverse communities have been introduced to regional funders through the fund.

PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED Funding Committee

**Co-Chairs**

Dona Ponepinto, United Way of Pierce County  
Brad Cheney, Ben B. Cheney Foundation

Lauren Fulton, OnePierce Community Resiliency Fund  
Cassandra Mitchell, KeyBank  
Georgia Lomax, Pierce County Library System  
Holly Bamford Hunt, Bamford Family Foundation  
Janice Levien, Greater Tacoma Community Foundation  
Jeff Woodworth, Woodworth Family Foundation  
Lois Bernstein, MultiCare  
Richard Woo, retired CEO, The Russell Family Foundation  
Seth Kirby, Greater Tacoma Community Foundation  
Todd Silver, Todd & Teresa Silver Funds  
Tyler Zemanek, Windows of Hope Foundation
Philanthropy plays a unique role under crisis conditions. Because of its flexibility and long-standing relationships, philanthropies can fill gaps and bridge governmental relief responses. Philanthropic funding can move rapidly, but philanthropy alone cannot meet the need.

Since its launch, the PCC participating funders have continued meeting monthly to share knowledge, questions, and connections around COVID-19 needs in Pierce County.

Elected leaders, nonprofits, and philanthropic experts have joined PCC regular meetings to amplify the impact philanthropy has during this pandemic.

Along the way, we’ve learned new lessons about leveraging connections to maximize community response and resiliency during the persistent crisis conditions of COVID-19.

**Daily Reports From The Field**

One of the biggest challenges for philanthropy in getting funding where it’s needed most is a basic question:

**HOW WILL YOU KNOW WHAT THE COMMUNITY NEEDS ARE?**

The PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED Aligned Philanthropies worked with the Pierce County Emergency Operations Center, Pierce County Health Department, Pierce County Human Services Department, Pierce County Schools, and our nonprofit agencies to surface new and urgent needs.

In partnership with the Ben B. Cheney Foundation, a “Community Response Committee” was formed, based on the Incident Command Structure used by agencies like FEMA.

**PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED COMMUNITY RESPONSE COMMITTEE**

Committee members checked in with community connections daily. Then the members reported back to Erika Tucci of the Ben B. Cheney Foundation to inform a daily email report.

The Daily Report allowed PCC to coordinate and facilitate urgent and immediate need requests from nonprofits and government agencies.
The Daily Report audience included the broader philanthropic community. That helped aligned philanthropies see the most urgent funding gaps.

Informed by the Daily Report, blog posts shared out insights to the wider public wanting to help their neighbors.

Beyond funders, though, the Daily Report supported collaboration and alignment among service providers.

"Thank you so much for putting this information out each week. I know that we have been monitoring this key information to pass on to refugee and immigrant families that may need services to get through this time. This was invaluable information each week. We are grateful for it."

— Feedback on the PCC Daily Report

In one example, mental health providers recognized shared needs through the daily reports and developed a partnership to make access to mental health services easier.

In another situation, providers shared the increased concerns and needs of those leaving domestic violence situations. The report helped elevate the issue to bolster supports for domestic violence survivors.

The Daily Report also reached elected officials. Those representatives let PCC know it offered them a lens into the impacts for their constituents that they couldn’t get anywhere else.

"I learned about one funding opportunity, through Pierce County that might have slipped our attention. Because we read about it in this newsletter, and were able to be alert for the application, we were able to apply and receive $75,000 for operating expenses - something that gives us a cushion as we enter the last half of 2020."

— Feedback on the PCC Daily Report

The Daily Report only lasted as long as it was actively driving connection. After about three months, other systems grew up to support the communication and visibility of needs. Then, PCC shifted resources to other areas.

Aligned Philanthropies still benefit from the trust and connections the Daily Report built. Those elected representatives have continued to follow up with the PCC aligned philanthropies for help connecting them to community needs.
Supporting Local COVID-19 Innovation

Like many areas of the country, COVID-19 testing and Personal Protective Equipment were in desperately short supply in Pierce County at the beginning of the pandemic.

GTCF was approached to support a testing concept from Tacoma’s RAIN Incubator, a biotech innovation network. RAIN is an acronym for Readiness Acceleration Innovation Network.

RAIN had a COVID-19 test that could be used to test the area’s sewage. They had the skills and capacity, but they needed bridge funds to get them up to scale.

Both GTCF and PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED funded RAIN to launch the testing build-out. This was an opportunity to meet a local need with local business when national support was not coming rapidly. Aligned Philanthropy supported community resiliency with business investment.

Emergency Food Network, the major food bank distribution nonprofit, partnered with RAIN through PCC to secure consistent testing for safe food supply to food banks.

The Tacoma News Tribune covered RAIN’s work in this story, “COVID-19 is in Tacoma’s sewers. Testing them will prepare us for future outbreaks, scientists say” (April 21, 2020).

Another Tacoma start-up, FAB LAB, a design, fabrication, and community makerspace, turned its work and 3D printers to making Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

PCC funded them to scale up their production. Then, supply chains improved for emergency responders. Once that happened, FAB LAB distributed PPE to the Puyallup Tribe of Indians because Tribal communities weren’t yet getting PPE from the state. The local supply helped the Puyallup Tribe take care of their people.

“It should be like an early warning system,” Hirschberg said. “We should be very alert now. So you could imagine in the future, if we had a surveillance system like this in place or a testing system, you would be able to detect when there’s a threat.”

– David Hirschberg Ph.D, Founder & Catalyst RAIN Incubator
At the very beginning of COVID-19, the PCC funding committee knew food, shelter, and childcare would be essential. They also knew they didn’t know what else might be critical.

The funding committee established some time-limited phases to the response.

The first phase provided an immediate $1 million in funding with no application to 40 organizations that were addressing the most urgent needs. These were organizations connected through the Daily Report.

Then, the next phase opened funding requests for rapid response. This second phase distributed $2 million in April.

The third phase, starting in May, opened the door to funding for what the funding committee called ‘emerging needs’ – needs that couldn’t have anticipated at the beginning.

Technology is an emerging need – something that has proven critical for community resilience. From staying employed and in school to getting access to health care and human connection, technology became essential under COVID-19 conditions.

Technology and internet access were issues for Pierce County before COVID-19. In 2019, the Pierce County Council requested evaluation of Broadband Access and Speed. A key conclusion from that was, “Because high-speed internet is necessary to employment opportunities, education, and identifying social resources, areas in which broadband is unaffordable or unreliable are at a distinct disadvantage.”

“Technology and Internet Access Are Essential Needs Under COVID-19 Conditions

FabLab Tacoma Co-owner/Director of Marketing William Davis,

“As normal supply chains were unable to keep pace with the growing demand for personal protective equipment (PPE), FabLab Nonprofit leveraged open-source designs, locally sourced materials, a team dedicated to volunteers, and crowdsourced funding to deliver scarce masks and face shields to the local essential workers who needed it most.

“We will emphasize distribution to tribal communities, essential workers that do not have current access to PPE, area shelters, social workers, and senior care providers.”
“Everyone in the house will now have to negotiate for bandwidth. No one conceptualized the negotiation of bandwidth in the American household, but that’s what it boils down to – who can connect to the outside world now? Is it the breadwinner or the children?

That is a horrible decision to have to make, and a conversation to have. It’s different from pure economics.

Moms and dads all over the world will say, ‘if it comes down to the last can in the house, you get it, but if it comes down to my ability to provide cans in that house – now we’ve got a whole new problem’.”

– Peace Community Center Development Director, Lianna Shepherd

PCC distributed nearly $200,000 for technology to help students, seniors, those needing telehealth, and more. As the technology requests grew, PCC drew on a critical philanthropic tool: the landscape scan.

While the funding committee saw the big need for technology, no organization in the community holds the center on technology needs ‘writ large’.

To better address the need, philanthropy needs the big picture.

PCC funded University of Washington Tacoma’s Center for Applied Urban Research to assess the status of internet and technology access across Pierce County. The scan is still being conducted, but this research will be made available to the full community to assist everyone in addressing the need.

Leveraging Philanthropic Tools: The OnePierce CARES Act Bridge Loan Indemnification Pool

One thing is clear under COVID-19 conditions, there is no ‘silver bullet’ when it comes to supporting resiliency during crisis and multiple system shocks. No single answer or tactic can fully support the community.

Working with the CARES Act funding in Pierce County is one place where Aligned Philanthropies piloted a new approach to build resilience.
Pierce County government received more than $150 million in CARES Act funding. The county’s funding plan relies on nonprofits to deliver millions of dollars for human services. That includes rental assistance to Pierce County residents.

However, Pierce County government contracts are reimbursement-only.

That means nonprofits would have to distribute tens of thousands or, in some cases, millions of dollars in cash assistance from their own reserves. Then they would have to submit for reimbursement from the county.

Many nonprofits don’t have the cash reserves or banking relationship to get a line of credit to front-fund the work. On top of that, the county faces the December 31 deadline to distribute the funding – or return it to the federal government.

A PCC funding partner, OnePierce, offered to provide no interest bridge loans to nonprofits so they had the cash flow to start delivering Pierce County CARES Act funded services. However, OnePierce needed backing funds to cover any potential loan defaults.

GTCF developed a pool to guarantee OnePierce’s loans. Part of the agreement included streamlining the loan process to minimize the burden on nonprofits. These organizations are already taking on a larger load to push out CARES Act dollars.

Several Aligned Philanthropies joined into the agreement GTCF developed and offered $2.5 million in backing funds.

Nearly $1 million in loans have gone out. These funds helped small nonprofits.

Small nonprofits often don’t have large lines of credit or well-established relationships with banks.

Supporting the organizations that directly serve those most impacted can mean flexing the unique financial tools philanthropy has at its disposal. Innovation is a valuable tool when it comes to building resilience during crisis and system shocks.
9 Lessons From PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED
Aligned Philanthropy

1. Put out a clear value proposition at the start to recruit partners. This helps partners know what alignment will look like.

2. Invest in a communications structure that reaches a broad range of stakeholders on a frequent basis.

3. With rapid funding, local businesses can mobilize to meet local needs.

4. In the face of a crisis without a clear, linear timeline for recovery, establishing time-limited response phases (with date milestones for review and transition) gives structure and focus for responding to changing circumstances.

5. Examine trends in needs to uncover root causes that may not be readily apparent. Be willing to adapt the plan to include those discoveries.

6. There is no single ‘silver bullet’. It is necessary to apply many tactics, in tandem, to support community resilience.

7. Philanthropy is best when it fill gaps and provides bridge funding to larger governmental funds.

8. Philanthropy can leverage a broad range of tools, like loan guaranty, to support rapid response to community needs.

9. Crisis can be an opportunity to innovate solutions that uniquely meet your community.

COVID-19 has tested Pierce County’s systems at every level. There was no way for philanthropy to predict what might fail, or where needs might emerge.

However, PCC Aligned Philanthropies have seen that:

+ Deep and well-maintained relationships with community leaders
+ A commitment to collaboration, and
+ Developing alignment that allows for both individual and combined action...
  have made a positive difference in our community being able to weather system shocks.

The final component that has helped our community is documenting our lessons along the way.

Early in our efforts, Richard Woo, the former CEO of The Russell Family Foundation and a member of the PCC Funding Committee, pointed out that we had the opportunity to document this incredible journey to help us in the future.

It’s not just the lessons, though. It’s the practice of capturing and sharing the hard-won knowledge this time provides that enables Aligned Philanthropy to grow stronger for the challenges that are yet to come.
PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED FUNDING PARTNERS

Amazon
Anonymous
Ballmer Group
Bates Family Foundation
Beardsley Family Foundation
BECU
Ben B. Cheney Foundation
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Campbell Family Foundation
Campbell/Loan Family Charitable Fund
CHI Franciscan
Columbia Bank
Corry & Donna J. McFarland Foundation
Elevate Health & One
Pierce Community Resiliency Fund
Elliott Family Foundation
Foundation for Tacoma Students
JayRay
JP Morgan Chase
Laird Norton Family Foundation
Laird Norton Wealth Management
Laird Norton Trust Company
LT Murray Family Foundation
KeyBank
Korum for Kids Foundation
Laird Norton Foundation
Medina Foundation
MJ Murdock Trust
MultiCare
Names Family Foundation
Oscar T and Olivann Hokold Foundation
Pacific Source
Perigee Fund
Premera Blue Cross
Propel Insurance
Puget Sound Energy Foundation
Rotary 8
Roy & Patricia Disney Foundation
Ruth Foundation
Satterberg Foundation
South Sound 100Women
Stewardship Foundation
Stolte Family Foundation
The Baker Foundation
The Bamford Foundation
The Russell Family Foundation
Todd & Teresa Silver
Tom and Meg Names Family Foundation
Umpqua Bank
United Way of Pierce County
Wells Fargo
Whisper Foundation
Woodworth Family Foundation

PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED DONORS

Abigail Smith
Acorn 23
Alan Harrison
Aleandra Cratsenberg
Alex Straub
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Ali Modarres
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CC Barnes
Chapin Day
Charles Richardson Jr
Charles Turner
Charles Welsh
Chase Taylor
Chris Colleran
Chris Taylor
Chris Ueland
Christina Mitchell
Christina Schuck
Christopher Jeter
Clara K Ladd
Clark Construction Group, LLC
Coleman Coggin
Colleen Short
Columbia Bank
Columbia Tough
Mother Funder Fund
Cynthia McCormick
Cynthia Williams
2020 PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED FUNDING RECIPIENTS

ACT - A Common Thread
Advocates for Immigrants in Detention NW (AIDNW)
AHAT Homecare
All Saints Community Services
Amara
American Heart Association, Puget Sound
Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Association, Evergreen Chapter
Arthritis Foundation
Arts Impact
Asia Pacific Cultural Center
Associated Ministries
Bates Technical College Foundation
Bethel Community Services
Bethel School District Foundation
Bonney Lake Food Bank
Bonny Lake-Lake Tapps Area Senior Citizens
Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound
Buckley Senior Citizens Building Beyond The Walls
BYTM (Building Youth Through Music)
Cancer Pathways
Cares of Washington
Catholic Community Services Centro Latino
Child Care Resources
Children’s Home Society of Washington - Key Peninsula
Children’s Therapy Center
Citizen Corps Council of Pierce County
City of Puyallup
City of Tacoma Fire Department
College Success Foundation
Communities in Schools of Lakewood
Communities in Schools of Peninsula
Communities in Schools of Tacoma
Community Health Worker Coalition for Migrants and Refugees
Community Youth Services
Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Crystal Judson Family Justice Center
Cultivating Our Sisterhood International Association, Inc. (COSIA)
Dave Purchase Project
Degrees of Change
Disciples Terrace
Eastside Assembly of Believers
Eatonville Area Council/Eatonville Family Agency
Eloise’s Cooking Pot Food Bank
Emergency Food Network
Empowering People in Communities
Exodus Housing
FabLab Nonprofit
Families Unlimited Network
First 5 FUNdamentals
Forward Operating Base (FOB) Hope Foundation for Tacoma Students
Gig Harbor Key Peninsula Suicide Prevention Coalition
Gig Harbor Peninsula FISH Food Bank & Community Services
Girls Hearts on Fire
Goodwill of the Olympic & Rainier Region
Greater Destiny Church
Greater Gig Harbor Foundation
Greater Metro Parks Foundation
Greentrike
Harbor Hope Center
Harbor View Manor and Salishan Gardens - HumanGood Affordable Housing
Harvest House
Helping Hand House
Homeownership Center of Tacoma
Homeward Bound in Puyallup - New Hope Resource Center
HopeSparks
House of Matthew Permanent & Supportive Housing Program
House of Prayer Foundation
HumanGood Affordable Housing
Innovations Human Trafficking Collaborative
Key Peninsula Community Council
Key Peninsula Metropolitan Park District
Kindred Souls Foundation
Korean Women’s Association
Krownless Kings
L’Arche Tahoma Hope Community
LASA
Lighthouse Storehouse Food Center
Lutheran Community Services Northwest
Making a Difference Foundation (MADF)
Marymount Manor
MetroParks Tacoma
Metropolitan Development Council
Mom & Me Mobile Medical Clinic
Mountain View Community Center
Multicare Health Foundation
Multicultural Child & Family Hope Center
Mustard Seed
NAMI Pierce County
Neighborhood Clinic
New Phoebe House Association
North Pierce County Community Coalition
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
Northwest Trek Foundation
Nourish Pierce County
Oasis Youth Center
Olive Crest
OnePierce Community Resiliency Fund
Open Life Church
Orting Food Bank
Our Sister’s House
Pacific Lutheran University
Palmer Scholars
PCAF
Peace Community Center
Pierce County Fire District 16
Pierce County Juvenile Court
Pierce County Project Access
Pioneer Human Services
Plateau Outreach Ministries
Prairie Ridge Community Coalition
Progress House Association
Puyallup Food Bank
Puyallup Tribe of Indians
RAIN Incubator
Rainbow Center
Raising Girls
Rebuilding Together South Sound
Recovery Café of Orting Valley
Redeemer Lutheran Church - Hope
for the Future
Sabala International Center
Sacred Bridge
Salvation Army Northwest Division
Sea Mar Community Health
Centers
Share and Care House
Shared Housing Services
Sound Outreach
Spana-Park Senior Citizens Organization

Springbrook Connections
St. Leo Food Connection
St. Vincent de Paul of Tacoma
Step by Step Family Support Center
Summer-Bonney Lake Family Support Center
Summer Community Food Bank
Sumner-Bonney Lake Family Support Center
Tacoma Arts Live
Tacoma Community College
Tacoma Community House
Tacoma Farmers Market
Tacoma Fire Department
Tacoma Kidz
Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness
Tacoma Pierce County Health Department
Tacoma Public Schools Daycamp
Partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound, Greentrike, MetroParks Tacoma, YMCA Pierce & Kitsap County
Tacoma Rescue Mission
Tacoma Special Needs PTA
Tacoma Urban League
Tacoma/Pierce County Habitat for Humanity
Tacomaaprobono Community Lawyers
TeamChild
The Coffee Oasis
The Islamic Center of Tacoma

The Moore Wright Group
The REACH Center
The Salvation Army
The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic At Valley Cities
The Wishing Well Foundation
TOGETHER!
Town of Steilacoom
Treehouse
Trinity Lutheran Church
Trinity Neighborhood Clinic
Trinity Presbyterian Church
True Vine Senior Citizens Center (a division of the Barbara Jean Brown Foundation)
United Way of Pierce County
University of Washington - Tacoma Center for Applied Urban Research
University Place Presbyterian Church
Valeo Vocation
Wakulima USA
Washington Children’s Support
What a Blessing Street Outreach
White River Education Foundation
White River School District
White River Senior Services
World Relief Seattle
yähaw’ - Indigenous Creatives
YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties
Your Money Matters Mentoring
YWCA Pierce County