

Coronavirus and Massachusetts Nonprofits

Last updated Friday, March 20, 2020 at 11:45 am.

MNN acknowledges the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on Massachusetts nonprofits as employers, conveners, and service providers. Click the links below to be directed to Flash Poll results, Philanthropic and Government Relief, Federal and State Policy Updates, Actions and Resources for Nonprofits, and Resources for Virtual Fundraisers and Events sections of this webpage.

Go to [Flash Poll Results](#) (poll duration: 3/11-3/18)

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PHILANTHROPIC AND GOVERNMENT RELIEF

Philanthropic and governments across Massachusetts are setting up funds to support organizations and communities that have been impacted by the coronavirus. See below for a list of funds. MNN is updating this list as often as possible.

- [The Boston Foundation – COVID-19 Response Fund](#)
- [City of Boston – Boston Resiliency Fund](#)
- [Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts](#)
- [Essex County Community Foundation COVID-19 Response Fund](#)
- [Foundation for MetroWest – MetroWest Emergency Fund](#)
- [Greater Worcester Community Foundation COVID-19 Response Fun](#)
- [United States Small Business Administration – Economic Injury Disaster Loans](#)
- [United Way of Central Massachusetts](#)
- [United Way of Greater New Bedford](#)
- [United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley](#)

Additional philanthropic funds can be found on [Philanthropy Massachusetts's website here](#).

FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY UPDATES

Federal and state government policy relief efforts are underway, and MNN is engaged in communication and advocacy at all levels to ensure that nonprofits are included in any appropriations and other relief policies.

Read our full initial list of policy recommendations [here](#), and about MNN's policy response [here](#).

MNN will be making regular updates to the COVID-19 Policy Response section of its blog [here](#).

Below is a list of state and federal policy developments to date.

Federal Policy Updates

Families First Coronavirus Response Act

On March 19, the President signed into law, [H.R. 6201](#), the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#). The bill includes a complex set of temporary paid leave mandates and employer reimbursement provisions, as well as funding for free coronavirus testing, food nutrition security, and unemployment extension. For a full analysis on the implications of this Act on nonprofits, read the National Council of Nonprofit's analysis on the MNN's COVID-19 Policy Response blog [here](#).

U.S. Small Business Administration Economic Injury Disaster Loans

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) will offer low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to Massachusetts small businesses and nonprofits of any size suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Apply [here](#).

Loan details:

- Small businesses, including private non-profit organizations of any size, that have been financially impacted as a direct result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) since Jan. 31, 2020, may qualify for Economic Injury Disaster Loans of up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses which could have been met had the disaster not occurred. The interest rate for private non-profit organizations is 2.75 percent. SBA offers loans with long-term repayments in order to keep payments affordable, up to a maximum of 30 years and are available to entities without the financial ability to offset the adverse impact without hardship.
- Applicants may apply online, receive additional disaster assistance information and download applications at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance. Individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call (800) 877-8339. Completed applications should be mailed to U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155.

The deadline to apply for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan is **Dec. 18, 2020**

Federal Grants Flexibility

The federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has posted [instructions allowing federal agencies to issue exceptions](#) to the grants rules in the [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) to remove administrative impediments on services necessary to carry out the emergency response related to COVID-19. The Memo ([M-20-11](#)) encourages flexibility in processing renewals of grants, allows looser reimbursement and purchasing standards, and more.

State Policy Updates

Economic Injury Disaster Loans

On March 19, the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation had announced that it was no longer accept applications to the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Funds “due to the availability” of funds. Applications are currently being reviewed. The fund was originally given a \$10 million infusion. Check Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation’s website [here](#) for updates.

Unemployment Insurance Flexibility

Federal and state workforce agencies, and state legislative leaders, are taking a series of actions to assist workers and employers.

To assist individuals who cannot work due to the impact of COVID-19, on March 18, 2020, the Baker administration signed into law [emergency legislation](#) that allows new claims to be paid more quickly by waiving the one week waiting period for unemployment benefits.

The MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development is also filing emergency regulations that will allow people impacted by COVID-19 to collect unemployment if their workplace is shut down and expects to reopen in four or fewer weeks. The following conditions apply:

- Workers must remain in contact with their employer during the shutdown.
- Workers must be available for any work their employer may have for them that they are able to do.
- An employer may request to extend the period of the covered shut-down to eight weeks, and workers will remain eligible for the longer period under the same conditions described above.
- If necessary, DUA may extend these time periods for workers and employers.

See more information on unemployment and other employment issues [here](#).

Note: Pending federal legislation proposes further relief, including additional money for unemployment benefits, and relief to employers for charges related to unemployment benefits paid due to COVID-19.

Ban on Public Gatherings and School Closures Statewide

On Sunday, March 15, Governor Charlie Baker announced five new public health orders that would bring sweeping changes across the state in the coming weeks, aimed at limiting the spread of the coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease.

The orders include closing down all schools in the state for three weeks effective on Tuesday, March 17, and banning public gatherings of 25 people or more.. Schools that are already closed will remain so. The orders also mandate that all restaurants and bars in the state would not be allowed to serve customers on site, and be restricted to serving food and beverages only through delivery and takeout. The orders are effective Tuesday, March 17 and will remain in place through April 5.

Read the full text of the order [here](#).

ACTIONS AND RESOURCES FOR NONPROFITS

How might the outbreak affect nonprofits?

As key service providers and organizations in frequent contact with the community, nonprofits may potentially face these and other impacts:

- increased and sustained staff and volunteer absences;
- disruption of services to your clients and communities;
- disruption of supplies or services provided by your partners;
- cancellation of programs or events (and corresponding reduced revenue);
- increased demand for services/support from your clients and communities; and
- budgetary implications related to strains on the economy.

What can nonprofits in Massachusetts do to respond?

Nonprofits should consider rescheduling or canceling programs or events, revisiting their work from home and sick leave policies, and thinking through ways to effectively communicate COVID-related updates with employees and other stakeholders. Nonprofits should also stay informed throughout the duration of the outbreak from reputable sources like the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Rescheduling or cancelling programs or events

Effective Sunday, March 15, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has banned gatherings of over 25 people. The order also banned in-house consumption in restaurants and bars, and closed public schools for the next three weeks (until April 5). Nonprofits should familiarize themselves with the full language of the ban [here](#) and stay up to date with news reports.

Additional considerations for rescheduling or cancelling programs and events include:

- Determine a deadline for making a decision about whether or not to cancel a program and event.
- Determine if the program or event can be hosted virtually (e.g. a webinar or live stream). See below for resources:
 - **Resources for virtual events and fundraisers:**
 - Free webinar: “[What am I supposed to do about my fundraising event?](#)” (from the Washington Nonprofit Institute)
 - [Auctria](#) – online fundraising / auction platform
 - [CauseVid](#) – nonprofit video email platform, now with a free version for nonprofits
 - [Give Lively](#) – free fundraising platform
 - [Funraise](#) – online fundraising platform / donor database
 - [GiveSmart](#) – online auction / event software
 - “[13 innovative fundraising ideas for nonprofits & Charities](#)” (CauseVox)
 - “[Web conferencing 101 for nonprofits](#)” (TechSoup)
 - Comcast is opening its Xfinity WiFi Network for free, and is offering unlimited data for free for two months. They are also offering new, low-income Internet Essentials customers with two months of free internet. [Learn more.](#)
 - LogMeIn (the parent company of GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar) is now offering its web conferencing software free to eligible entities—including front-line nonprofits, eligible healthcare providers, educational institutions, and municipalities—for the next 3 months. [Learn more.](#)
- Consider when, how, and how often to communicate with program participants or event attendees, sponsors, and partners.
- Ask donors to convert sponsorships and ticket sales to donations, rather than refunds. See guidance on how to do so from AAFCPAs [here](#).
- Consider the impact of canceling a program or event on revenue, including whether or not to explore event insurance to mitigate the costs of a major event cancellation (e.g. fundraising events). (See “[What you need to know about coronavirus and special event insurance](#)” from Insureon.)
 - Manage contracts with event venues, caterers, and other event stakeholders. (See “[Managing Contractual Relationships During the COVID-19 Crisis: Force Majeure Clauses and Other Approaches](#)” from Hemenway & Barnes.)
- Read the World Health Organization’s (WHO) “[Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of the current COVID-19 outbreak.](#)”

Revisit work from home and sick leave policies

Nonprofits may be considering adjustments to or implementations of a work from home policy out of concern for their employees’ health. Nonprofits should:

- Review their policies related to illness and sick leave to ensure that they are consistent with public health recommendations.

- Prepare for the possibility of increased numbers of employee absences by updating or creating policies that support remote work and create systems for employees to utilize the option.
- If a nonprofit does not currently have a work from policy and wants to draft one, see a sample remote work policy on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's website [here](#) for use as a template.
- Read the CDC's "[Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to the Coronavirus Disease.](#)"
- Read Littler's "[Coronavirus: Employer Action Items.](#)"

Communicate

Nonprofits play an important role in educating and reassuring employees, volunteers, and other stakeholders.

- Talk with your team. Reassure your team that you care about their health and safety.
- Make telecommuting options available for as many employees as possible. For businesses in which telecommuting is not an option or for particular duties that cannot be performed remotely, follow proper steps above to limit close contact, and prevent the spread of disease.
- Urge employees to stay home if sick.
- Promote good hygiene (washing hands frequently, covering coughs, cleaning frequently-touched surfaces, etc.).
- Remind employees of your organization's policies related to illness and sick leave, and be flexible with sick leave benefits for those who are ill or who are recommended to stay home because they are high risk.
- Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Be mindful that different members of your team may perceive the threat differently or have special concerns based on their life circumstances. For example, persons with elderly family members may be especially concerned, and Asian Americans are likely facing increased racism. Leaders should be prepared to recognize, respond to and prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin, and be sure to maintain confidentiality regarding the health of specific employees. Speak out if you see this happening. (Seattle & King County Public Health developed a [great infographic.](#))
- Read the Communications Network's free "[Coronavirus Crisis Communications Triage Kit](#)" for how to communicate about the disease clearly, accurately, and effectively.

Travel

As of Friday, March 13, the CDC has issued a [Level 3 travel notice](#) (avoid all non-essential travel) for China, Iran, South Korea, and [European countries](#), and a Level 2 notice (older or chronically ill individuals should consider postponing) for Japan. The Trump Administration instituted additional restrictions on travel from China, Iran, and Europe. Nonprofits should:

- Postpone or cancel business-related travel to countries with travel notices or restrictions and seek alternative means of achieving the purpose of the trip.
- Continue to monitor the CDC and other health organizations for updates on and exercise reasonable judgment in determining the best course of action for employee work travel. There are no current domestic travel restrictions.
- Note that employers may not prohibit employees from personal travel. However, they may impose restrictions on employees returning from affected areas or potentially exposed to the virus, such as a two-week work-from-home or leave arrangement.

Stay informed

- Read, listen to, and watch the news, and regularly check reputable sources such as the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#) and [US CDC](#).
- Reference the World Health Organization's coronavirus disease (COVID-19) [advice for the public](#).
- Read the CDC's [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease](#)
- Read the CDC's [Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission](#)
- Visit [OSHA's information page on COVID-19](#).
- Nonprofit Risk Management Center has put out [COVID-19: 5 Things to Know & Do](#)
- [Subscribe](#) to MNN's newsletter or follow our [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#) feeds. We'll continue to share resources and recommendations about how organizations can prepare and respond.

Some of the language in this article was adapted with permission from the Maine Association of Nonprofits.