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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Eastern Washington funders launch COVID-19 Community Response Fund to address immediate and long-term needs of communities**

SPOKANE, WA, March 17, 2020; A coalition of philanthropic, government, and business partners has joined together to create a COVID-19 Response Fund that will rapidly deploy resources to community-based organizations at the frontlines of the region's coronavirus outbreak in Eastern Washington. The fund is designed to complement the work of public health officials, medical providers, businesses and governments to expand regional capacity addressing the outbreak as effectively as possible.

In the coming weeks, the fund will rapidly deploy resources to community-based organizations working in communities who are disproportionately impacted by coronavirus and the economic consequences of the outbreak.

Hosted by Innovia Foundation, the COVID-19 Eastern Washington Community Response Fund will provide funding to organizations that have deep roots in community and strong experience serving the elderly, homeless, residents without health insurance and/or access to sick days, communities of color, people with limited English language proficiency, healthcare, hospitality and gig economy workers, and low-wage employees, among others.

Grants will be administered in partnership with a Regional Pandemic Community Advisory Group consisting of funding partners and community representatives. The Advisory Group will proactively identify potential grant recipients, solicit guidance on potential recipients from community advisors, and recommend final awards. In order to move resources quickly and not further burden organizations on the frontlines of the pandemic, we are not hosting a formal application process at this time. Funds will be released on a rolling basis as fundraising continues throughout the outbreak and recovery phases of the crisis, making it possible to move resources quickly and adapt to evolving needs in subsequent funding phases. The Fund expects to make an initial round of grants within the next few weeks.

Individuals and organizations can donate and find additional information about the COVID-19 Response Fund via [www.innovia.org/covid19](http://www.innovia.org/covid19). Innovia is working with philanthropy partners in North Idaho to establish a similar response fund in that region.

“The coming days and weeks will reveal new and unforeseen challenges to our communities,” said Innovia Foundation CEO Shelly O’Quinn. “This collective action by local funders will provide an immediate, local response to support those who are most vulnerable to the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The Fund is anchored by the following initial donations: \$50,000 donation from Innovia Foundation; \$50,000 from Avista Foundation; and \$50,000 from Premera Blue Cross. Additional funders will include Spokane County United Way, Empire Health Foundation, Providence Healthcare, Women Helping Women Fund and the Community Building Foundation.

## **PARTNER STATEMENTS**

“There are many unknowns in this crisis, but we do know all our fund partners are fully committed to providing support to those at highest risk of health and economic challenges. A special thanks to our front-line workers who are risking their own health to keep the rest of use safe. This fund is here to assist you and your organization for as long as it takes.”



-- Empire Health Foundation Interim President Jeffrey Bell

“Today feels different because of the crisis we are all in, but I know together we can provide critical support to our community. We are proud to join with local foundations to find innovative ways to support people to ensure every family, child, and individual in our community has access to basic needs. Mobilizing volunteers and financial resources is always a necessity and I thank everyone for your willingness to give and support others in this critical time.”



**Spokane County United Way**

-- Spokane County United Way President and CEO Tim Henkel

“The breadth and impact of this virus make this an unprecedented time, and collective action is our only solution. We’re committed to working with our many partners in eastern Washington and in all of our communities to help us all manage this health emergency.”

-- Premera President and CEO Jeff Roe



“Together, we’ve been through fires and storms, recessions and depressions, and our communities have always persevered. We recognize that times like these require compassion, connection and collective action. While the situation we’re facing right now will undoubtedly create a burden for many, we are encouraged by the strength and resilience of our communities. We recognize we have the opportunity to relieve some of this burden, and Avista is honored to be one partner in this collaborative effort.”

-- Executive Director of the Avista Foundation Kristine Meyer



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Innovia Foundation ignites generosity that transforms lives and communities so that every person has the opportunity to thrive. As the community foundation for Eastern Washington and North Idaho, we partner with people who want to make our world better. We work together to address and solve our region’s problems, help those in need, identify and respond to our greatest opportunities and leave a lasting impact. Each year, Innovia Foundation invests nearly \$7 million into our communities through grants and scholarships to nonprofit organizations and local students.