COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund
Workforce and Small Business Working Group

The Workforce and Small Business Working Group seeks to help mitigate the impact of reduced wages and lost work for hourly workers as well as the inability of small business owners to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our immediate goals are to:

1) provide direct financial support to workers, specifically black and brown workers, workers not eligible for unemployment insurance, and hourly and gig workers;
2) support small business owners who might not be eligible for or the recipients of current government support; and
3) support nonprofits’ ability to conduct advocacy and community organizing to respond to new legislation, budget priorities, and policies to ensure all workers and families are included and can benefit.

In our conversations with our nonprofit partners and stakeholders have identified several of the most current critical needs specifically for workforce and small business. The most immediate needs center around direct financial assistance to help workers and entrepreneurs cover their financial obligations, as well as support for advocacy and organizing groups to stay on top of the number of new city, county, and federal legislation and policies targeting relief and assistance for workers, entrepreneurs, and small businesses.

Given our current knowledge of immediate needs with workers and the small business community, the Workforce and Small Business Working Group’s initial funding priorities will include:

- Direct financial assistance to workers, including those workers who do not qualify for unemployment Insurance (gig workers, undocumented workers, contractors, etc.).
- The purchase of equipment, including software, by nonprofits in the workforce and adult education space in order to conduct online learning, case management, job assistance, or other means of support for online learning.
- Efforts to assist workers from severely impacted industries, specifically retail and hospitality, to connect to temporary and immediate employment opportunities.
- Support for advocacy and organizing nonprofits to respond to current policies (local and federal) that are being proposed and/or implemented over the next three months.
- Financial support to licensed family-based providers (small businesses), whose businesses are struggling due to social distancing mandates, to pay for expenses like rent, utilities, and staff-related costs.

Our immediate goal is to provide rapid support for critical service organizations during this initial phase of the pandemic and social distancing. As the situation unfolds, we expect the working group’s priorities to evolve and shift. In addition to our work outlined above, we are coordinating with the federal, county, and local government response to complement and align our efforts. We are also working with our advocacy partners to ensure that what we are learning about the needs of our region’s workers and small business owners impacted by the COVID-19 crisis are included in the response.