National Council of Nonprofits

Using the Advocacy Tools You Have

By: David L. Thompson

We wrote it at the outset and repeat the point here: the $350 billion in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds aren't going to spend themselves. State and local politicians need to be reminded that **a)** charitable nonprofits have performed above and beyond the call of duty during the pandemic, and **b)** charitable nonprofits are still hurting. The new Special Report from the National Council of Nonprofits provides many examples and messaging points for charitable organizations to turn the promise of the federal funds into resources that support organizational and community recovery. In short, the Special Report is a set of tools with which nonprofits advocates can advocate.

So, what does that advocacy look like? Like anything the imagination can dream up. Here are a few recent examples.

Shortly after publication of the Special Report, the **Kentucky Nonprofit Network** sent out an alert to their members sharing the report's substance and uses. For instance, the member message informed nonprofit professionals about the "nearly four dozen examples of successful programs that they can promote as models for new programs funded by these new resources." KNN also incorporated some of the report themes in crafting its Open Letter to City and County Leaders, a resource that weaves national information with Kentucky-specific data gleaned from prior research and surveys. By issuing the Open Letter, KNN paved the way for all nonprofits in the

Commonwealth to amplify the message that governments must invest the recovery funds in charitable organizations.

This past week, the **Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations** issued an Action Alert urging nonprofits to advocate for the Commonwealth to provide targeted support exclusively to nonprofits through PANO's [Targeted Relief Media Campaign](#). The advocacy efforts reflect frustration that, "More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, we still have not seen targeted support for the nonprofit sector."

In March, [Maryland Nonprofits](#) wrote to local leaders to "encourage their support of local nonprofits and to encourage partnership with your local community foundation," and [CalNonprofits](#) reminded California's mayors, county supervisors, and city councilmembers that "[n]onprofits must be at the forefront of your investment priorities."

The [Utah Nonprofits Association](#) sent a letter to Utah's Governor in mid-May making the case for setting aside a significant portion of the funds as grants to local nonprofits. Similarly, the **Minnesota Council of Nonprofits** and partner organizations sent a [letter to state policymakers](#), and a separate letter to officials in each of the state's 87 counties, "asking for immediate action to create a nonprofit resiliency and recovery fund, which would provide critical investment in the nonprofit organizations delivering essential services to Minnesotans across the state."

Finally, three **Massachusetts** - Boys & Girls Clubs MA Alliance, Massachusetts YMCA, and **Providers' Council** – modeled the way by sending a [letter to government officials urging them to use American Rescue Plan Act funds](#) to cover the unemployment costs of reimbursing employers. The letter states, "The American Rescue Plan dollars create an opportunity for the Commonwealth to assist the nonprofits that stepped up and served during the pandemic. We ask that you utilize this funding to offset the remaining unemployment insurance costs for nonprofits." Many states have shown a willingness to pay off state unemployment loans from the federal government and replenish the state unemployment trust fund; the letter from the three organizations called on Massachusetts to fairly reimburse nonprofits, too.