



ABFE

A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities

***Releasing the Power of ABFE's Membership to Strengthen Black-led Infrastructure
for Social Change
Addressing COVID-19 and its' Aftermath***

As with other crises before COVID-19, the rapid spread and devastation of the virus makes long-standing systemic inequities in the areas of health, housing, workforce and assets more visible. Amid pressure from African American leaders, the Centers for Disease Control has released limited race and ethnicity data on COVID-19 cases and deaths covering 14 states for the month of March, 2020. Despite only covering a subset of states, this limited data set confirms what we already know; that African Americans are being hit the hardest by this pandemic. On the economic front, in an April 9th article, NPR reported that [16.8 million people have filed for unemployment in the past three weeks](#) (a historic record), and a Data for Progress survey conducted April 5-6 reports that [45% of Black voters and 33% of all voters have lost their job, been put on leave, or had hours reduced due to the coronavirus pandemic](#).

COVID-19 relief by the philanthropic sector has been swift; over 400 relief funds and efforts to address the pandemic are in play by international, national and local philanthropies. Given the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on Black communities, the demand that relief efforts center equity is paramount so the rush to “help” does not further exacerbate racial disparities and do more harm than good. Now more than ever, Black communities must be organized and engaged to hold relief efforts, private philanthropy and public systems accountable. Strategies to retain and grow assets in Black communities and to connect our people to decent jobs with live-able wages and benefits must be deployed. ***Now is the time to invest in Black-led infrastructure to build political and economic power in our communities.*** Not doing so makes us complicit in the demise of African peoples and strength in America. As ABFE's national network turns 50 next year; we say, “not on our watch”.

Our plans fall into four areas, both of which rely on the 700+ network of philanthropic leaders across the mainland and the U.S. Territories to support immediate relief efforts as well as a longer-term strategy:

I. RELIEF: Engage in Policy/Advocacy

ABFE staff are paying close attention to the federal response to COVID-19 and have weighed-in on several fronts to ensure that both public (federal, state and local) and private resources consider the disproportionate impact on of the virus on Black communities. We will continue our advocacy efforts in both the federal and philanthropic sectors.

II. RELIEF: Keep Black Nonprofits Abreast of Emerging Funds

We have started ongoing, periodic messages to our membership about relief efforts for them to share with Black nonprofits in their grantee and community networks. These messages will continue through our social media, newsletters and blogs as long as these relief efforts and funds exist. We have also made ourselves available to calls with Black-led nonprofit intermediaries to share information about access to funding opportunities and strategies for working with funders at this time.



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III. RELIEF: Channel Funders and Donors to Select National COVID Relief Efforts that Target Black Communities

ABFE has developed a set of recommendations for foundation and donor considerations relative to the impact of COVID-19 on Black communities that we will circulate throughout our membership. These national funds focus on our goals of building Black-led infrastructure for political and economic power. These relief efforts target Black communities and are ready now to receive funds to deal with the impact of COVID-19 as well as its aftermath.

- 1. Black-led Movement Fund – Rapid Response Fund. Borealis Philanthropies.** The Fund prioritize requests from Black-led community-based and constituency-led organizations. Requests should be short-term and time-sensitive and initiated in response to an urgent issue or event connected to your organization's existing agenda and efforts. Examples of activities that might be funded: mutual aid funds; direct services for people negatively impacted by COVID-19; wellness/healing/community care/trauma-related work; travel for groups to take part in urgent actions, strategy convenings and/or important meetings; new strategies or approaches that are not traditionally resourced; organizing and policy responses to an emerging issue; IT and communications strategies to keep people connected and informed. Donors interested in supporting the Fund should contact Julia Beatty at jbeatty@borealisphilanthropy.org
- 2. BET + United Way COVID-19 Relief Fund.** The health and financial devastation wrought by COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting African Americans. BET has established a COVID-19 Relief Fund in partnership with United Way to support and amplify relief efforts in our communities that have been severely impacted by the pandemic. You may donate to a specific city or where need is greatest among listed communities. The Fund will disburse grants to local community-based organizations, with a focus on families in need of food assistance and emergency support. <https://www.bet.com/shows/bet-news-special/news/2020/4/saving-our-selves-a-bet-covid-19-relief-fund.html>
- 3. Movement for Black Lives COVID19 Mutual Aid Fund.** During times of great crisis, the systems in America that fail Black people on a normal day become even less reliable and the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. Where we can, we are providing for one another by developing mutual aid networks, organizing, and creating virtual spaces for connection and joy. Where we don't have enough or where the systems meant to meet the needs of the people fail, we're demanding more from our elected officials. Contributions will help the Coalition map Black led mutual aid efforts, provide direct support to Black led organizations and provide a virtual space for our people at this time. <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/m4blcovid19fund>
- 4. Black Vision Fund PanLiquidity Program. Prosperity Now.** The Black Vision Fund (BVF) is a bold initiative to build a \$80 million debt/grant fund to provide financing tools for Black-led Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) to invest in the expansion of Black businesses. Given the COVID-19 crisis, BVF proposes to design and manage the Pandemic Liquidity Grant Program (PanLiquidity) for any certified Black-led CDFI that specializes in financing Black-owned businesses (including Black-led and focused non-profits). PanLiquidity will approve and make grants to any Black-led CDFI that has been



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managed well and financing Black-owned businesses for 3 years or more. These grants will be awarded to offset shortages in both funding and revenues of applicants that are rated well in their documentation of prior year loan originations to Black-owned businesses, planned 2020-21 increased originations and new product innovation. Donors interested in supporting the fund should contact Gary Cunningham, at gcunningham@prosperitynow.org.

5. **MainStreet RISE COVID 19 Small Black-Owned Business Relief Program. Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO).** COVID-19 has disproportionately crippled small Black business owners. These businesses which are critical to the well-being of the Black community are on life support and in urgent need of financial support and help. The coronavirus economic relief packages are overlooking millions of micro- (less than five) and Main Street businesses (up to ten) employees—this includes 96% of all Black-owned businesses in this country. These businesses which are critical to the financial well-being of the Black community, hit by COVID-19, are now on life support. MainStreet Rise relief for Black-owned businesses has several components. The first is the **Buy Now. Shop Later™** program provided by Fanbank which enables the business owner to generate revenue during the shutdown by selling store credits—similar to what we have come to know as gift cards. It is the key to our comprehensive revenue solution. The second component is access to tools and resources to achieve success which helps Black business owners to recover faster and fight back against competitive and technical forces including digital products, bookkeeping and mentoring services and coaches. Donors interested in supporting the program should contact Connie Evans at cevens@aeoworks.org.

IV. **LONG-TERM: Build ABFE Capacity to Strengthen and Sustain Black-led Infrastructure to Build Political and Economic Power in Black Communities**

Pre-and post-COVID, and in alignment with our 50th Anniversary, ABFE seeks to raise funds to build out our human and operational resources for the next five years to work with membership on the following:

1. **Organizing Collective Investments in Black-led Social Change to Build Economic and Political Power.** Several strategies are being considered here:
 - i. Organize National Funders to Strengthen Black-led Infrastructure for Social Change. In 2017, with the Hill-Snowdon Foundation, we launched the Black Social Change Funders Network in efforts align resources for leverage and greater impact. With Campaign support, we can re-launch and appropriately staff this organizing network to spur national and local strategic action.
 - ii. Organize Regional Investment Pools and Strategies to Strengthen Black-led Infrastructure for Social Change. ABFE will partner with members in select regions across the country to assist in the development of funding collaboratives to support Black-led organizations. We have identified models across the country that can be replicated (ASCEND; Long Island Racial Equity Funder Collaborative; Out in the South; etc.) ABFE staff will take on temporary lead staffing to get these efforts off the ground. *This strategy also includes raising seed funding nationally to promote matching grants to catalyze local funding.*



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- 2. Expand Philanthropic Advising Services to Influence National and Local Funder Investments on Black-led Social Change.** ABFE has successfully engaged funders in our Racial Equity training and advising services. We will build out this work to specifically work with national and local funders to increase investments in Black-led social change organizations. This work includes: 1) surveying Black-led social change organizations in select regions of funder interest to help identify financial and technical assistance needs. We will pay particular attention to their “readiness” to survive disasters and crises; 2) support in building funding portfolios to provide resources as well as technical assistance to support capacity building of these groups; 3) curriculum modifications to add new content on investing in Black-led social change to our advising services; and 4) online learning tools to expand the reach of our advising to larger and more dispersed funder and nonprofit audiences. We will look to work with the largest foundations in the country to provide the deepest impact.
- 3. Increasing and Diversifying ABFE’s Membership.** Investments are needed to broaden ABFE’s membership and increase the philanthropic network’s impact. ABFE seeks to increase engagement with corporate foundations; Black family foundations; Black civic organizations that carryout grantmaking such as fraternities, sororities, LINKs; Black funds based at Community Foundations; and social impact donors and venture capitalists. There are multiple sources of regional philanthropy focused on Black communities (donor-advised funds, giving circles, etc.); ABFE will bring them into our membership base and serve as a “bridge” to ensure that national philanthropy can partner with these resources to leverage investments for greater impact.
- 4. ABFE Growth Fund to Support Infrastructure and Capacity.** Investments in ABFE comes at a critical time for the organization as we approach 50 and look to *implement the above mention strategies*. Funds will be used to “shore up” ABFE with: critical technology upgrades; building out member services tailored to a growing, more diverse audience; recruitment, hiring and on-boarding of select C-suite staff; new offices to accommodate our larger team; and business modeling to grow an earned revenue stream.