



Nonprofit Association
of the Midlands
Serving Nebraska & Western Iowa

The Nonprofit Association of the Midlands strengthens the collective voice, leadership and capacity of nonprofit organizations enriching the quality of community life throughout Nebraska & Western Iowa.

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Anne Hindery

June 15, 2020

Governor Pete Ricketts
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94848
Lincoln, NE 68509-4848

Thank you to you and your staff for your hard work in managing and administering CARES Act funds. The relief and response efforts are truly vital to meeting the needs of Nebraskans at this difficult time. The CARES Act and the Coronavirus Relief Fund provide important opportunities to help meet the needs of Nebraska workers, families, and businesses impacted by the pandemic.

The Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM) represents more than 13,000 nonprofit organizations in Nebraska. On behalf of our members—nonprofit organizations work directly with people with varying needs, and see firsthand the impacts the pandemic has had on people's lives—we believe it is critical for individuals and organizations to have an opportunity to provide input on the distribution of CRF dollars. Further, we believe nonprofits should be eligible for business funding as well, since we too are businesses, and many of us have suffered significant revenue losses.

We call on you to allow nonprofits to be eligible for business grants and to promote transparency and responsiveness to the needs of Nebraskans by taking the following steps:

1. **Make business grants available to nonprofits:** There are over 13,000 nonprofits in Nebraska, and we employ 1 of every 11 working Nebraskans. Like other businesses, many nonprofits are struggling financially due to COVID. Like the Paycheck Protection Program, struggling nonprofits should be eligible for the \$392 million in grants that has been provided to businesses.
2. **Provide additional funding for services to individuals:** Your plan includes \$392 million for businesses and \$85 million for the Community CARES program, which is for organizations who serve individuals. That's 460% more to businesses compared to organizations offering direct relief. We believe that many of the grants outlined in the CARES program will be insufficient, such as funding for mental health and housing. Also, no money is included for direct assistance to individuals and families, likely creating unnecessary barriers and delays when people need relief now. Broad public input can help identify the gaps in the program as outlined.

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3. **Prioritize funding for communities of color:** The plan should prioritize funding for minority owned businesses, many of whom won't be eligible for the business grants due to the minimum employee threshold. Furthermore, the Community CARES program prioritizes funding for organizations that provide support to low income/underserved people, but there is no specific mention of the communities of color that have been ravaged by COVID.
4. **Make the CRF process open and transparent, including:**
 - a. **Open a public comment period:** Implement a two-week public comment period and allow Nebraskans to provide input on how the CRF dollars are proposed to be distributed. Ensure equal access for rural communities, non-English speakers, communities of color, low-income communities, and people with disabilities. This provides an opportunity for stakeholders to express their input, as most have been left out of the process.
 - b. **Be transparent about the selection process:** Identify who will administer and develop the guidelines and selection process for administering CRF funds.
 - c. **Brief the legislature:** Provide regular public briefings for members of the Legislature about how the CRF is being distributed.
 - d. **Create advisory groups:** The state's ability to respond to the impacts of COVID and administering the funding of federal dollars to those most in need will benefit from advisory committees made up of stakeholders and practitioners who work with individuals and communities who are directly impacted by the pandemic.
 - e. **Establish a process for private contractor oversight:** Identify and publicize who and how the government will oversee the work of private contractors and their role in direct oversight. Publicize the relationships between government oversight and contractors to ensure public trust of the handling of taxpayer dollars.
 - f. **Designate an ombudsperson:** Provide an ombudsman for questions, comments, and appeals of funding decisions for stakeholders seeking resources and assistance.
 - g. **Develop an online tracker:** Develop a public and transparent online tracker of resources and expenditures of taxpayer dollars related to the CARES Act and the Coronavirus Relief Fund.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to a response and to partnering with you to help all Nebraskans during this difficult time for our state and country.

Sincerely,

Anne Hindery



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