

THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY

FOUNDATION GIVING

Nonprofits Are Struggling. These Emergency Funds Are Offering Help

The philanthropic response to the federal government's defunding of nonprofits has been sluggish, but rapid response funds are starting to emerge.

By *Stephanie Beasley*

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NURPHOTO VIA AP

James Kunder, former deputy administrator of USAID, speaks at a demonstration in support of the agency's employees who were fired or placed on leave by Elon Musk and the department of government efficiency.

The Trump administration's foreign aid freeze and pause or cancellation of federal funding to a wide range of human service and other organizations have caused chaos in the nonprofit sector. In just two months, program cuts, layoffs, and [financial uncertainty](#) have become rife.

Many major foundations have been [slow to respond](#) to the administration's actions and its cascading effects, but in recent weeks several emergency funds have emerged. They are operated mostly by intermediary and small donor groups, such as Borealis Philanthropy, a social-justice grant maker whose contributors include the [Ford](#), [Freedom Together](#), and [MacArthur](#) foundations, among others. Borealis Philanthropy said it will soon launch the Security, Action, and Freedom for Everyone (SAFE) initiative — providing rapid response

grants of \$5,000 to \$50,000 for legal resources, cyber-defense, and upgrades to digital and physical security.

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“Across the country, we’re seeing intensified attacks on democracy, bodily autonomy, and the safety of those organizing for liberation,” Sade Dozan, vice president of advancement at Borealis Philanthropy, said. “That’s why we’re building SAFE with intention and urgency.”

Borealis has allocated \$2 million in rapid response funds and wants to raise at least \$5 million for SAFE ahead of its launch. It has been in conversation with potential funders in recent weeks. Borealis is calling on philanthropic partners to join the SAFE initiative “because meeting the scale of the threat requires moving together,” Dozan said.

The philanthropic response to the federal government’s defunding of nonprofits has been sluggish when compared with other recent crises, such as the pandemic and the racial reckoning that followed the murder of George Floyd in 2020, Dozan noted.

“We did see faster mobilization at scale, and we’re not seeing that right now,” she said.

There have been exceptions such as [California Endowment](#), [Freedom Together Foundation](#) (formerly JPB Foundation), John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, all of which have announced annual payout increases in response to federal policy changes. Within three weeks of Trump’s inauguration, the Boston Foundation created a special round of [“safety net”](#) grants of \$25,000 to \$75,000 using \$2 million from its endowment. Donors with donor-advised funds managed by the foundation quickly responded, increasing the fund’s total to \$3 million, according to Lee Pelton, Boston Foundation’s president.

“This is an opportunity for the foundation sector to exercise its leadership,” he said.

New Emergency Funds

Below is a list of emergency response funds compiled by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. We would like to keep an ongoing list available on our website. To let us know about more

funds, contact us at editormail@philanthropy.com.

The Boston Foundation's [Safety Net Grants](#)

The Boston Foundation is offering one-year, general operating support grants of \$25,000 to \$75,000 for “essential needs,” including: combating hate and discrimination; food, fuel and shelter; legal aid; and poverty alleviation. The foundation also is specifically supporting immigrants, people identifying as LGBTQ, those with disabilities, and seniors.

Borealis Philanthropy's SAFE initiative

The SAFE Initiative will provide grants of \$5,000 to \$50,000 to help social justice organizations maintain operations and take measures to protect themselves from digital and physical threats.

The [Rapid Response Fund](#) for international aid from Founders Pledge and the Life You Can Save

This fund aims to help international aid nonprofits such as the International Rescue Committee. The groups have raised more than [\\$1.5 million](#) so far.

Four Freedoms Fund's [Immigration Frontlines Fund](#)

Four Freedoms is a funder collaborative launched more than 20 years ago by [NEO Philanthropy](#), which aims to raise \$10 million this year to advocate for and protect immigrant communities.

GiveDirectly's [fund for families impacted by cuts to U.S. foreign aid](#)

GiveDirectly provides direct cash transfers in the United States and abroad, which it often used to do in collaboration with the now-dismantled U.S. Agency for International Development. This online campaign aims to raise \$1 million to assist families impacted by U.S. foreign aid cuts.

GlobalGiving's [Community Aid Fund](#)

GlobalGiving, an intermediary group that connects donors and companies to nonprofits, aims to raise \$1 million to support locally led nonprofits worldwide that have been impacted by the freeze on U.S. international aid.

Global Philanthropy Project's [Fund Our Futures Campaign](#)

Launched in advance of President Donald Trump's return to the White House and in anticipation of anti-LGBTQ backlash and funding cuts worldwide, the Global Philanthropy Project is a funder network that has raised \$105 million from 31 funders and seeks \$150 million total for LGBTQ causes, which will be distributed over the next three to five years.

The Meyer Foundation's [rapid response grants](#)

The Washington, D.C.-based foundation provides funding to nonprofits in the surrounding area, including cities and counties in Maryland and Virginia. It is offering one-time, rapid response grants of \$10,000 to \$20,000 to current grantees focused on racial justice and systems change.

The [Foreign Aid Bridge Fund](#) from Unlock Aid, along with #HalfMyDAF 2025, Smarter Good, and other partners

This fund will support nonprofits affected by the U.S. foreign aid cuts and that work directly with communities globally. More than 500 organizations have applied for the short-term grants of \$50,000. The campaign aims to raise about \$5 million this year.

Alex Daniels contributed to this article.

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DIGITAL FUNDRAISING

Stephanie Beasley

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