



Spokane County United Way

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation gives \$250,000 to Eastern Washington COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund**

SPOKANE, WA, March 25, 2020; The Gates Foundation announced today a donation of \$250,000 to the Eastern Washington COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund that will rapidly deploy resources to community-based organizations at the front lines of the region's coronavirus outbreak.

This commitment from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation brings the Eastern Washington Response and Recovery Fund to \$631,500, with donations from businesses, philanthropic organizations and individual donors.

The fund is hosted at Innovia Foundation in partnership with Empire Health Foundation and Spokane County United Way.

"This generous donation from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provides a message of hope for local communities that are disproportionately impacted by coronavirus and the consequences of the outbreak," said Innovia Foundation CEO Shelly O'Quinn. "We are grateful to them, and all the regional funders, who have quickly stepped forward to support those who are most vulnerable to the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic."

The \$250,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is part of a commitment of up to \$5 million that the foundation announced in early March to support the COVID-19 outbreak response efforts throughout Washington State.

"The pandemic feels like a universal experience, but we have to recognize that not all of us will experience it equally," said Melinda Gates, co-chair of the foundation. "By supporting local community response efforts, we can help make sure that, in this moment of crisis, we're not leaving the most vulnerable behind."

In the coming weeks, the COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund will provide funding to organizations that have deep roots in community and strong experience serving the elderly, homeless, residents without health insurance and/or access to sick days, communities of color, people with limited English language proficiency, healthcare, hospitality and gig economy workers, and low-wage employees, among others.

Grants will be administered in partnership with a regional community advisory group consisting of residents and leaders from health, economic and human services sectors. The advisory group will proactively identify potential grant recipients. Grants will be released on a rolling basis as fundraising continues throughout the outbreak and recovery phases of the crisis, making it possible to move resources quickly and adapt to evolving needs in subsequent funding phases. The advisory group expects to make an initial round of grants within the next few weeks.

Individuals and organizations can donate and find additional information about the COVID-19 Response Fund via [www.innovia.org/covid19](http://www.innovia.org/covid19). Innovia Foundation has established a similar fund in North Idaho with philanthropy partners to provide a response in the 10 northern counties.

The COVID-19 Eastern Washington Community Response and Recovery Fund is anchored by donations from funders including Innovia Foundation, Empire Health Foundation, Spokane County United Way, Avista Foundation, BECU, Burlington Northern, Community Building Foundation, MultiCare Health System, Premera Blue Cross, Providence Healthcare, Wells Fargo, Women Helping Women Fund and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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Innovia Foundation ignites generosity that transforms lives and communities so that every person has the opportunity to thrive. As the community foundation for Eastern Washington and North Idaho, we partner with people who want to make our world better. We work together to address and solve our region's problems, help those in need, identify and respond to our greatest opportunities and leave a lasting impact. Each year, Innovia Foundation invests nearly \$7 million into our communities through grants and scholarships to nonprofit organizations and local students.