

ORCAS ISLAND
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

THE OICF RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

MEETING THE CHALLENGE



MINOR LIFE | APRIL 2022



Cover: Eastsound in the morning from the Madrona Point Dock;
This page: President Channel from Limpet Lane

The Orcas Island Community Foundation was founded in 1995 to help build and strengthen our community by encouraging and supporting local philanthropy and by connecting people and organizations who want to make a difference by improving the quality of life on Orcas Island.

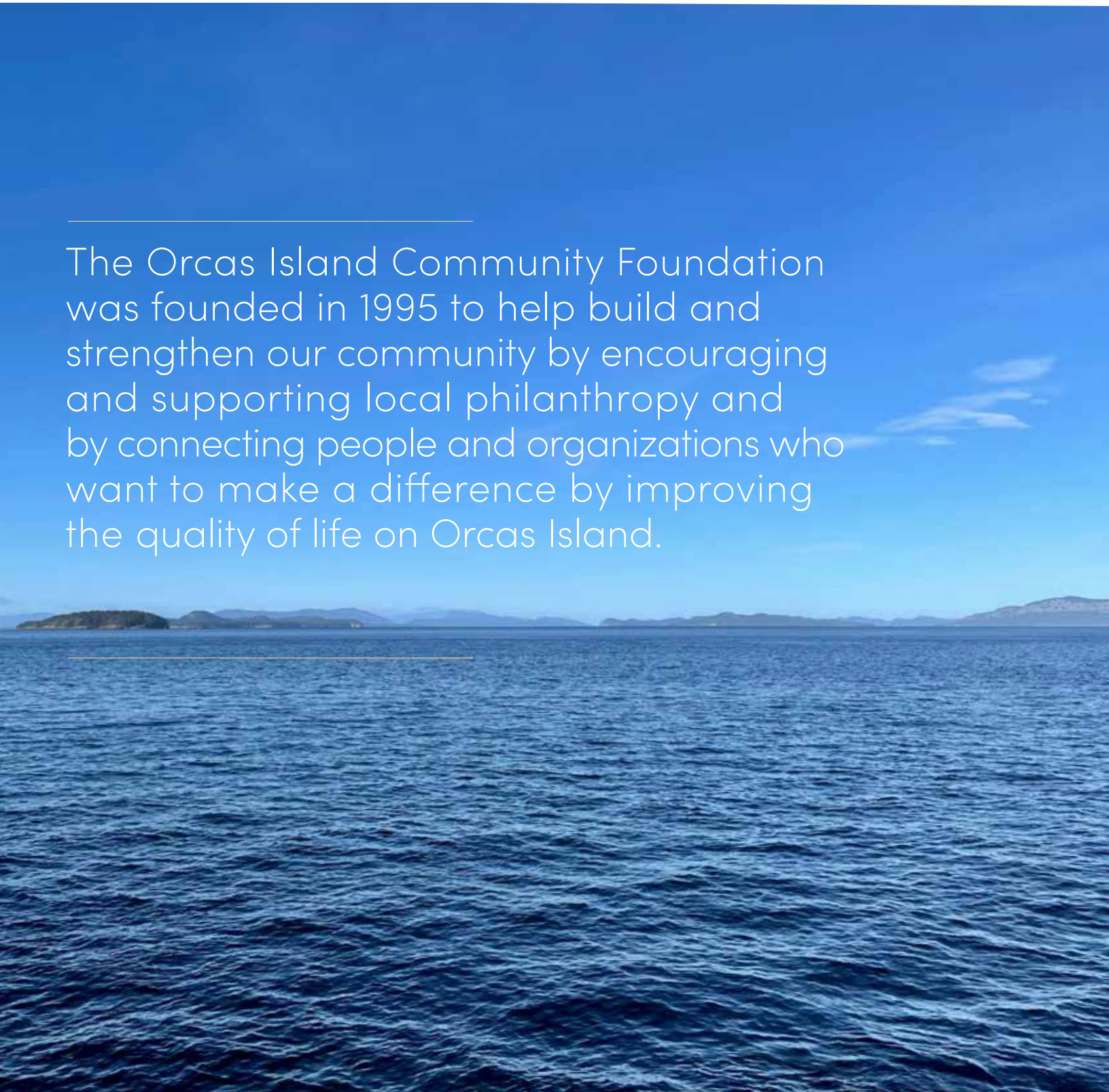




TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Forward
4	Introduction
9	Observations and Findings
12	Before the Pandemic
17	The Community Emergency Response Fund
21	An Overwhelming Community Response
22	Distribution and Use of Available Funding
27	Oversight
29	Numerous Lines of Communication
32	Community Check in Calls
34	Volunteer Coordination
36	The Economic Recovery and Resiliency Initiative
39	Taking Care of Each Other
41	Final Thoughts
43	Appendix A
44	Appendix B
45	Appendix C

Yes, we can! Our county government, public health entities, local businesses, schools, farms, camps, and a diverse network of nonprofits all stretched themselves well beyond their normal contours to address the crisis and did a remarkable job.

FORWARD

When the coronavirus pandemic took over our lives and disrupted every aspect of daily routines and expectations on a local, national and global scale, none of us knew how critical this mission would become. The Orcas Island community was put to a grave test. Could we overcome the fear and overwhelming nature of the pandemic to figure out a plan to care for the vulnerable among us?

Could we make sure that essential services were available to everyone even though so many of us were forced into isolation? Could we preserve the quality of life on Orcas Island even though the very terms of “quality” had radically shifted?

Our community realized there could only be one answer to these questions: Yes, we can! Our county government, public health entities, local businesses, schools, farms, camps, and a diverse network of nonprofits all stretched themselves well beyond their normal contours to address the crisis and did a remarkable job. We also owe a tremendous debt to the essential workers who showed up every day despite the serious risks they faced so that our community could function.

Here at OICF, under the tireless leadership of our Executive Director Hilary Canty, we quickly mobilized our family of nonprofit organizations focused on social services and then expanded the tent to include many others. This report describes the role that OICF and these particular nonprofit organizations played in helping our island survive the first two years of the pandemic. It also explores some of the places we stumbled in that effort.

This experience has reinforced what we already knew about Orcas Island: that our community has enormous resources to meet a crisis because of the great generosity of its residents who contributed their time, skills, ingenuity, donations (big and small), and emotional support wherever and whenever needed.

OICF wants to thank Robbie Macfarlane who encouraged us to tell the OICF story and who gave us a grant to make sure we could enlist a talented writer to get the job done. We want to thank Minor Lile who spent many hours interviewing people about their work during this period and then capturing the key aspects of these conversations in this report.

It is our hope that this report will inspire others who may face unexpected community crises that come their way.

Judy Scott
Orcas Island Community Foundation, Board Chair
April 2022



INTRODUCTION

In late February 2020, the ripples of the coming Covid pandemic began to wash upon the shores of Orcas Island. In those early days, many thought the pandemic would only last for a short time, perhaps a few weeks or months. There were few who predicted that two years, later the world would still be living in the shadow of the pandemic and all that has happened in the wake of its arrival.

At the beginning, there were so many things that were happening simultaneously. Seemingly random cases were being discovered in nearby places. The first official Covid death in the nation occurred in a hospital in Kirkland, WA, approximately 90 miles to the south of the San Juan Islands. Soon after that, Northwest nursing homes were closed to family and other visitors after being found to have high case levels. A choir practice in nearby Mt. Vernon became known as one of the country's first super-spreader events. A local couple was stranded halfway around the world when their cruise ship was quarantined and not allowed to land at any nearby ports of call.

On March 11, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic. Four days later, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee issued a 'Stay Home, Stay Healthy' order that closed all 'non-essential' businesses. Even before these steps, San Juan County had opened an Emergency Operations Center and begun strengthening contact tracing systems and preparing for possible worst case scenarios, including the securing of possible triage sites on each of the County's major islands. Shortly thereafter, in alignment with the direction being set by the Governor, the County's Public Health Officer, Dr. Frank James, issued orders closing lodging establishments throughout the islands. The County also found itself caught up in the worldwide scramble to secure adequate supplies of masks and other personal protective equipment.

We watched as Italy closed down and the Italians began serenading their appreciation for health care workers from their balconies. Places like Seattle and New York City reported hospitals packed with Covid patients on ventilators and families forced to say final goodbyes to loved ones by cell phone. Here in the San Juans, we debated about bringing up the drawbridge and banning off-island visitors. It was a troubling time, filled with a great deal of disruption, anxiety and uncertainty.

Local businesses were required to close just as they had begun to gear up for the seasonal influx of island visitors. Many island households suddenly found themselves without the income needed to provide for rent or mortgage payments because their jobs had abruptly ended.

On Orcas Island, the Orcas Island Food Bank was suddenly confronted by a situation in which the need for its services had increased dramatically and yet it was unable to operate safely because nearly all its staff and volunteers were of an age that was considered to be 'at-risk'. The Orcas Community Resource Center had to shut its doors to in-person services for those in need. The Orcas Senior Center also closed its doors and discontinued serving its in-person lunches, which had provided nutritional meals and a lively social setting for over 100 seniors every week. All public facilities, including Moran State Park, the Orcas Island Library, and public sanitary facilities were closed, leaving many of those with transient housing or who were houseless stranded and without access to critical services.

Despite having a high at-risk population, with 35% of the County's residents aged 65 or older, there were, as of March 2022, just two Covid-related deaths and approximately 1,225 total reported cases in San Juan County.

The Orcas Island School District announced that local schools would be closed for at least two weeks. This initial closure was eventually extended into the following school year and beyond. Additional closures included childcare and early education learning centers like Children's House, the Funhouse, and Salmonberry School. But even as so much was falling apart, countermeasures were also being implemented. In recognition of the need to respond quickly and effectively to all that was

happening to disrupt the economy and lives of working and retired people on the island, the Orcas Island Community Foundation (OICF), led by Executive Director Hilary Canty, was swinging into action.

Initial steps included the establishment of a Community Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and naming of an advisory committee to guide the use of the fund. Additional early actions included the establishment of an online volunteer hub and initiation of a weekly Zoom gathering that served as an essential nexus for the sharing of information and mutual support. The Community Foundation was also directly involved in the forming of a Shelter Group that was tasked with devising strategies to meet the Covid-related needs, including shelter, hygiene and food preparation, of the local homeless population who suddenly had no safe or sanitary place to stay.

From the beginning, other core social service organizations, including the Orcas Community Resource Center, Orcas Senior Center, Orcas Island Food Bank and OPAL Community Land Trust, joined forces with OICF. Together they assessed the critical needs of our island community and how their own operations could be reconfigured and expanded in order to respond capably to the enormous challenges of the pandemic.

People on Orcas Island and throughout the San Juan Islands can look back on the last two years and appreciate how remarkably the community came together and rose to the challenge. Despite having a high at-risk population, with 35% of the County's residents aged 65 or older, there were, as of March 2022, just two Covid-related deaths and approximately 1,225 total reported cases in San Juan County. In early 2022, the San Juan County Health Department reported that nearly 90% of county residents had been fully vaccinated. At the time, these numbers were among the best in the entire country.

While the response on each of the three primary islands (Orcas, San Juan and Lopez) differed in certain ways, the distribution of Covid cases was essentially equivalent to each island's share of the overall population. For example, approximately 32% of County residents live on Orcas Island and approximately 33.7% (or just over 400 cases) were identified on Orcas Island.

The following report provides an assessment of the Orcas Island Community Foundation response to the emergence of the Covid -19 pandemic and consequent disruption of daily life on Orcas Island. In considering the various steps that were taken, both before and after the declaration of the pandemic in March 2020, this report is intended to provide useful information to those who are seeking to draw lessons that can help guide planning for future challenges. It describes what went well in the response, what might have gone better and what are the lessons that

have been learned along the way. The report concludes that the overall effort was remarkably successful in assuring that the island's social safety net provided necessary support to those whose lives had been most dramatically disrupted by the pandemic.

In looking back at this extraordinary period, it is also valuable to recognize that whatever challenges the future may hold, the circumstances that existed over the last two years will certainly be different the next time around. The nature of the challenge, the individuals involved, their relationships with each other, the organizational dynamics, and sources of available funding will not be the same as they were. Even so, there are insights that can be drawn from the experience that can – if reflected upon and heeded – help to guide the actions and decisions of those who will come to the forefront in confronting future challenges as they arise.

The information and reflections that shape this report have been gathered through interviews with many of the individuals who were directly involved in supporting, organizing, coordinating, and leading the community response. Those interviewed include CERF advisory committee members, several OICF Board members, executive directors and board members for each of the island's core social service organizations (OCRC, Orcas Island Food Bank, OPAL, and the Orcas Senior Center), former and current County Councilmembers, CERF donors, as well as those on the front lines who have provided service and support to program beneficiaries. Additional information has been gathered through a thorough review of relevant documentation provided by the Community Foundation. Please see Appendix A for a list of all those who were interviewed.

Notwithstanding these efforts, there are indisputable gaps in the author's knowledge of the overall community response. Beyond those who have been interviewed, there are many others who were involved in ways both large and small whose stories do not appear here. Perhaps the most significant missing piece is the stories of those who directly benefited from the support that was provided to those in need. Recounting the whole story of the community response in all its intricacy may someday come to pass. This is not intended to be that comprehensive story – it is instead a consideration of certain aspects of the response with which the Orcas Island Community Foundation was most directly involved.



OBSERVATIONS & FINDINGS

It is readily apparent from the information that was gathered for this report that there is a deep reservoir of appreciation for the role the Orcas Island Community Foundation played in responding to the Covid pandemic.

The overall response of the Orcas Island Community Foundation and other island social service organizations has been exemplary. The people of Orcas Island can justifiably look back on the last two years and appreciate how remarkably the community came together and rose to the challenge.

Information in the report is presented chronologically. The story begins well before the arrival of the pandemic in March 2020. There were significant steps that were taken in the years prior to the pandemic that lay the foundation for the Community Foundation's response. The report then turns to a consideration of the community response in the early days of the pandemic, followed by an exploration of the many successes and handful of challenges that emerged as time went along.

For those seeking additional information, the OICF 2020 Annual Report provides a general synopsis of the entire OICF Covid response and is an excellent accompaniment to this report. You can find it at bit.ly/3GFF7o6



Cover of the OICF 2020 Annual Report

The following points summarize the key observations and findings that have emerged over the course of preparing this report. Each is discussed more fully in the body of the report.

- Planning and preparation prior to the emergence of Covid provided a robust platform for an effective response to the challenges that arose. These efforts included the strengthening of internal operations at the Orcas Island Community Foundation and other non-profits, as well as collaborative work on the part of OICF to support and strengthen the island's core social service organizations, particularly the Community Resource Center, Senior Center, and Food Bank.
- Well established relationships, mutual trust, and seasoned leadership of the island's core social service organizations were an essential factor in the success of the response.
- The generosity of the more than 850 individuals, families and organizations that donated over \$2.7 million to the Community Emergency Response Fund is truly remarkable. This impressive level of giving allowed for the vigorous response to the needs of the time.
- Widespread lines of communication and the inclusion of numerous stakeholders, combined with the capacity to make decisions and act quickly, all contributed to the overall success of the response.
- The role of OICF in securing and providing direct funding in the early days of the pandemic was especially advantageous in allowing each of the island's core social service organizations to focus on providing necessary services.
- Establishing the capacity to act quickly through the creation of the Community Emergency Response Fund and the CERF advisory committee elicited an appropriate response from the OICF Board to assure that effective financial and programmatic safeguards were in place to assess funding requests and proposals.
- In crisis situations such as that created by the emergence of the pandemic, there is a need to attempt to recognize the stress and at-times overwhelming demands of the emergency situation. The pressure and duration of responding to the challenges presented by COVID have led at times to those most deeply involved becoming overextended and at risk of experiencing burnout. Those in leadership positions need to try to avoid taking on new initiatives that risk over-extending the capacity of those most directly involved in coordinating the response.

Clockwise: Front door of a home on Orcas; Fresh organic food at the Orcas Island Food Bank; Crow Valley in the spring



BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

When the Covid pandemic arrived in March 2020, the Orcas Island Community Foundation (OICF) was remarkably well prepared. Over the course of the preceding 12 years, Executive Director Hilary Canty had worked closely with the OICF Board of Trustees to clarify and establish the mission and purpose of the organization.

Out of this process came a clear determination that in addition to managing charitable gifts from individual donors, families, businesses, and nonprofits, the central focus of the work of the Foundation was to support and strengthen the island's social service network to enhance the quality of life for all who call Orcas Island home. This agreement on the core mission of OICF was foundational in orienting the organization towards establishing closer working relationships with the island's social service non-profit organizations.

As one example of how this strategic choice was implemented, in 2014 OICF and the Orcas Community Resource Center (OCRC) began developing a closer working relationship. OICF was committed to helping the Resource Center grow from a small operation with one to two staff operating in cramped space to a vital community hub with the resources necessary to help residents in need. OCRC applied for and was awarded a \$25,000 grant through OICF's Community Grants Program that increased staff time from 1.0 FTE to 1.5 FTE. This additional staffing allowed OCRC to expand office support and additional time for direct services. The extra hours resulted in an increase in direct services for the community, with over 250 individuals and families served in 2014 compared to 125 families served in 2013. In the years since, OICF has continued to provide significant support to OCRC for both operations and organizational development.

OICF has also provided comparable support for the Orcas Island Food Bank. Most recently, in late 2019, Hilary Canty and former OICF Board chair Diane Berreth began facilitating a long range planning discussion for the Food Bank Board. This work was just getting underway when the pandemic began. This coincidental timing was beneficial in helping frame the Food Bank's major restructuring of its operations that became necessary in late March and early April. According to Bob Morris, the current chair of the Food Bank board,

"I think both Hilary and Diane were pretty surprised at how well it worked. Our board had new people on it, and some of the Board members had not even met each other. So we were in kind of a chaotic period, we didn't know each other well, and sometimes not at all, and we're trying to meet on Zoom. So whatever expense was put forth for the long range planning paid off because it gave us an opportunity to say what we were really all about. And that work proved to be a pretty accurate description of what we've come to do and how we continue to feel about the role of the Food Bank."

The presence of seasoned leadership at most of the community service organizations on the island was another critical factor in enabling a widespread community-based response.

OICF also began to build a closer working relationship with OPAL Community Land Trust, the leading developer of affordable housing in the community. According to OPAL Executive Director Lisa Byers, this relationship grew significantly closer as a result of a joint effort to raise funds for the development of the April's Grove apartments from 2017 onward.

The presence of seasoned leadership at most of the community service organizations on the island was another critical factor in enabling a widespread community-based response. At both the Board and staff level, many of those who played prominent roles in coordinating the response to Covid already had well-established working relationships with each other.

For example, when Covid arrived in the Spring of 2020, two former OICF board chairs and the current OICF Board chair were members of the OCRC Board. Another OICF board member was also serving as chair of the Orcas Senior Center Board. In all,

nearly a dozen individuals involved in the Covid response effort had experience serving on more than one social service organization Board. As a result, when Covid came, these previously established relationships between both individuals and organizations were already in place. This provided an immediate sense of rapport and mutual trust that served the community well over the course of the pandemic response.

Another key factor in the Community Foundation's effective response to Covid was the strengthening of the organization's internal operating systems in the years prior to 2020. Shortly after Hilary Canty became the Foundation's executive director in 2007, a series of steps were taken that greatly improved the capacities of the organization. Over the years, there were many board members and advisors who played key roles in this process. The legacy of these earlier Boards provided a strong foundation for the work of the Board that was in place when the pandemic began.

In our interviews, Canty recounted several times how Bob Lundeen, an OICF Board member in Canty's early years as Executive Director had advised her that it was essential to take the steps necessary to have internal systems in place that could meet the scale of needs in the community. One of these steps involved commissioning the development of a pioneering financial management system that provided support for a wide array of operational needs, including better fund accounting, a user-friendly, state-of-the-art donor portal and an accompanying capacity for accepting online donations, as well as other Customer Relationship Management (CRM) capacities.

After it was determined that there was no off-the-shelf product that could satisfy the needs that had been identified, the Foundation chose the potentially risky path of contracting with a local software engineer to design and develop the software. The outcome was remarkably successful, and the software, now known as CommunitySuite, has since become an industry standard used by community foundations around the country. The ongoing use and continual refinement of this financial management software has also resulted in the establishment of a reliable and trusted interface with donors.

Another element is the deep relationships with donors and recipient organizations that have been built through various Community Foundation programs. The GiveOrcas campaigns have been especially valuable in this regard. Since its beginnings in 2013, this twice a year program has provided significant support for many of the island's non-profit organizations, while also building relationships and establishing familiarity with the OICF website and donor portal. One key goal of the GiveOrcas campaigns has been to foster a sense of camaraderie among the island's non-profit organizations.

Each of these steps was foundational in building a trust-based relationship with donors, benefactors, and local non-profit organizations that served the community well when Covid arrived. As one long-time financial supporter put it, when the pandemic arrived, donating to the Community Emergency Response Fund through OICF, “was great because I had confidence that they were approaching it in a reasoned way and it’s also a personal deal because I know (they are) well-intentioned and smart enough to implement those intentions.”

Another major initiative was the establishment of the OICF Cornerstone program in 2009. The Cornerstones are individuals and families who donate \$1,000 or more per year to underwrite the administrative and operational costs of running the Community Foundation. The program has been quite successful since its inception in 2009, with approximately 100 Cornerstone donors providing over \$200,000 in 2021. This support covers approximately 70% of OICF’s administrative costs.

Because more than two-thirds of OICF’s administrative costs are covered by this focused donor-based program, the Community Foundation has been able to reduce and in some cases eliminate the direct administrative fees that are often associated with the management of donor funds. During the Covid pandemic, 100% of all donations to CERF were dedicated to recipient organizations without assessing any administrative fees.

An additional important internal development prior to Covid was the design and implementation of useful tools for analyzing grant requests and programmatic outcomes. Developing these assessment tools, or ‘rubrics’ as they are referred to at the Community Foundation, strengthened the Community Foundation’s capacity to assess grant requests.



THE COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND

In early March, Hilary Canty, in consultation with the OICF Board, quickly determined that the early challenges facing the community because of the pandemic required immediate philanthropic support, as it was apparent that governmental support would take more time to reach those impacted. In mid-March, The Community Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established as a designated fund to provide support to organizations meeting the immediate needs in the community.

Canty contacted the leaders of the island's core social service organizations and offered to have the Community Foundation assume short term responsibility for raising the funds that would be necessary to meet the challenge of the moment so that each of the organizations could focus on providing necessary services to those in need. Rather than requiring each of these non-profit organizations to go out on its own to solicit financial support for a specific purpose, OICF took the lead in establishing a central relief fund that made it easy for donors to target their contributions and also allowed for the allocation of the money where it was needed most.

Lynnette Woods, an OICF Board member and Chair of the Senior Center Board at that time, shared her appreciation for this approach:

"If it wasn't for the CERF I don't know what we would have done about Meals on Wheels over at the Senior Center because the need was ramping up like crazy and I was panicking. And I'm sitting there thinking about how are we going to pay for all of this, rather than thinking about transportation and getting meals to houses and Hilary just said, 'Look, you shouldn't have to worry about fundraising right now. You should worry about getting the job done. Here's some money.' And it showed up the next morning. I can't tell you what a huge relief that was, and what a huge weight went off (when that happened)."

An advisory committee was formed to oversee the collection and disbursement of funds. Members of the CERF advisory committee were Lisa Byers (Executive Director of the OPAL Community Land Trust), Erin O'Dell (Executive Director of the Orcas Community Resource Center), Judy Scott (OICF Board chair and OCRC Board member), Brian Moss (Senior Pastor at the Orcas Community Church), Berto Gándara (OICF Board member, Food Bank Board member, and Rector at Emmanuel Episcopal

Church) and Hilary Canty (Executive Director OICF). Kevin Ranker participated in the work of the Committee as a non-voting member. In early Summer of 2020, OICF Board member and Grants Committee Chair Susan Singleton also joined the committee.

Each advisory committee member was well-established and widely respected in the island community and brought significant strengths to the task. Canty, O'Dell, and Byers had each been in leadership positions at their organizations for a decade or more. Scott had served as chair of the OICF Board since 2019 and had run a major public interest law practice. In addition to his other responsibilities, Gandara served on the OICF and Food Bank Boards and also had close ties with the LatinX community, which is the largest minority ethnic population on the island. The Orcas Community Church, which Moss leads, has a long history of community involvement, including providing land adjacent to the church where the Orcas Island Food Bank is located.

By all accounts, they quickly formed an effective collaborative dynamic. As Judy Scott (advisory committee member and OICF Board Chair) put it, "We had thoughtful people who were truly dedicated to this work and who knew the needs of quite a number of people from different corners of our community. It was quite a team."

Initially, the advisory committee met twice a week, and later on an 'as needed' basis. The committee was driven by a need to move the money quickly into direct services that would make a real-life difference for a community living in shock and fear.

According to Lisa Byers, the initial format of the meetings was, "fairly unstructured and very organic. We recognized that as long as we were listening for the needs that emerged from the community and asking questions that would then guide how resources should be used and directed. We did work on establishing a protocol, but it was really after Susan Singleton joined the committee that we created (a more formal) application process. Prior to that, the people who were requesting funds would send an email to Hilary with their thoughts and we didn't really have a format. But if we didn't feel like we had enough information, we would ask the applicant to provide that information. It was really just built on trust.

Another CERF committee member, Brian Moss, shared that it was a situation in which they were being called upon to "Listen first, but act fast. We needed to listen to try to assess what was happening, but there also needed to be decisiveness."

Another significant early decision that Canty made was accepting an offer from Kevin Ranker, an island resident who had served on the San Juan County Council and in the State Legislature, to help in any way that he could. At the time that he offered to help, the Food Bank was in danger of closing due to nearly all its staff and volunteers being in at-risk categories and needing to isolate. Canty asked

Ranker if he would be willing to step in as interim manager of the food bank. He served in this role for several weeks until Amanda Sparks was hired as the Food Bank's permanent manager.

As Susan McBain, the Chair of the Food Bank Board at that time, shared, "By mid-March, things (at the Food Bank) were really in a crisis state. All but a few of our 25 to 30 volunteers, as well as the Food Bank's longtime manager, were age 60 or over. When Hilary asked Kevin if he would be interested in helping us. Hilary could see that we were desperate, and Kevin really wanted to help and she just kind of connected us up. He was only manager for about three weeks, but he really did hold us together because of his immense confidence and a lot of smarts. He could see holes that needed filling and he stepped into them and he just kind of let us work through the turmoil."

Ranker also participated in the meetings of the CERF committee as a non-voting member, where he provided both fundraising and programmatic advice. In addition, from April to September 2020, OICF retained Ranker as a contract consultant so he could concentrate on these needs. Through the connections that he had developed as a legislator and in his other work raising funds for national and global development work, Ranker was instrumental in recommending effective strategies and attracting high level donors who might otherwise not have become involved.



AN OVERWHELMING COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Prior to the creation of the CERF, Canty estimated that it was likely that up to \$250,000 would flow through the fund over the course of the pandemic. This amount was quickly reached and surpassed. By early May 2020, over \$650,000 had been raised and nearly \$570,000 had been distributed.

Eighteen months later, by mid-October 2021, the level of giving had grown to just over \$2,756,000. Of this, \$1.94 million was raised in donations and \$823,440 was received in a matching grant from the All In Washington program facilitated by the Seattle Foundation and funded by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. In our interviews, Canty said that establishing eligibility for the matching funds from All in Washington provided a strong incentive to donors who were partially motivated by the knowledge that their contributions would be matched dollar for dollar.

In all, over 850 different individuals, families, businesses, or other organizations contributed to the Community Emergency Response Fund. This remarkable outpouring of generosity by so many is a clear reflection of the wider community's commitment to providing a social safety net and to the trust that those who contributed placed in OICF's ability to assure that the monies would be well used and go where they were most needed.

\$2,763,440 RAISED Funds raised between March 5, 2020 & October 13, 2021



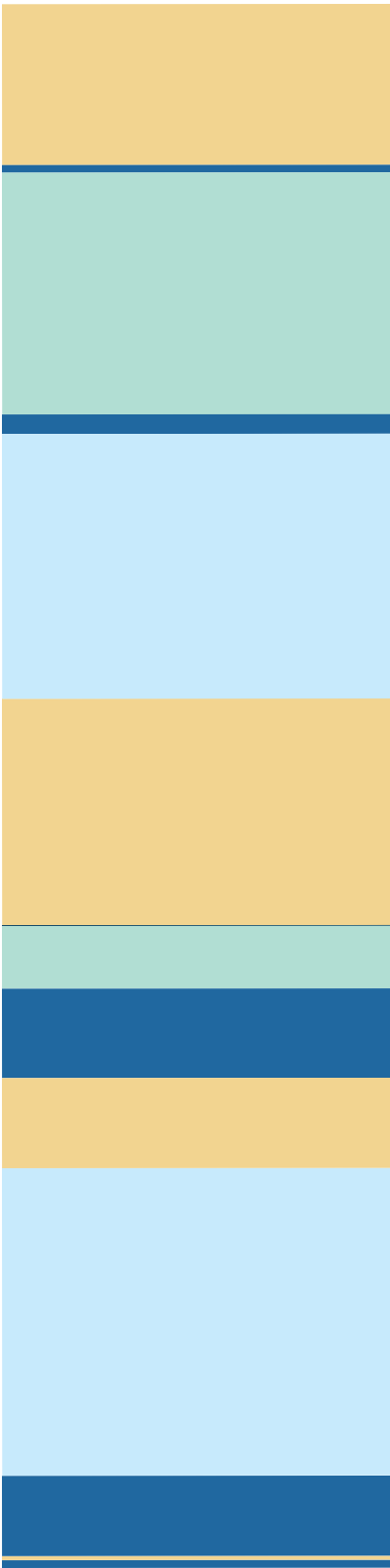
DISTRIBUTION AND USE OF AVAILABLE FUNDING

From March 2020 through mid-October 2021, over \$2.03 million was widely distributed to island non-profits to provide for a range of needs addressing economic stability, food security, educational opportunity, and other pandemic-related needs in the community. Between March 2020 and October 2021, the following organizations and programs received funding:

Orcas Community Resource Center: OCRC serves the community as an essential safety net by providing services and goods to island households that are not covered by other non-profits. CERF grants totaling \$343,629 provided for additional staffing with Spanish language proficiency, to meet greatly increased case management & social service needs, as well as funding the ongoing purchase of basic household supplies, food purchase coupons redeemable at local groceries, and emergency subsidies for electricity, propane, water and car insurance payments. The support from CERF enabled OCRC to extend services and support to over 85 new clients during Covid.

OPAL Community Land Trust: \$314,000 was granted to provide rental and mortgage assistance to over 440 island households. Eligible households also received assistance and advice regarding the management of household finances. The involvement of OPAL is a good example of the collaboration and sharing of responsibilities among island non-profits. At the beginning of Covid, the Community Resource Center was responsible for managing the island's rental and mortgage assistance programs. With the arrival of the pandemic, OCRC Executive Director Erin O'Dell and OPAL Executive Director Lisa Byers, both of whom were members of the CERF committee, agreed that OPAL would assume temporary responsibility for administering the rental and mortgage assistance monies being provided by CERF. OCRC retained responsibility for administering rental and mortgage assistance funds that were coming from public sector funding sources.

Educational Initiatives: Over \$513,000 was granted to support educational activities during Covid. This included a grant of \$294,207 to the Orcas Island Education Foundation to support outdoor education activities as an alternative to the in-classroom sessions that had been curtailed due to school closures. The program provided (and continues to provide) one day per week of in-person, outdoor activity for each class in the Orcas Island School District. This grant provided approximately 50% of the funding needed for the program, with the remainder coming from the school



\$2,032,077 DISTRIBUTED

Funds distributed between March 5, 2020 & October 13, 2021

\$208,858 Early Childhood Education Initiative: increased access to early childhood education & daycare

\$9,875 Island Rides: electric vehicle purchase

\$314,000 OPAL Community Land Trust: rental & mortgage assistance

\$25,310 Orcas Center: safety videos & musicians for vaccination clinics

\$343,629 Orcas Community Resource Center: case management, increased social services, household supplies, utility support & staff expansion

\$294,207 Orcas Island Education Foundation: OISD Outdoor Education Program

\$778 Orcas Island Farmers Market Association: COVID precautions for safely reopening

\$81,200 Orcas Island Food Bank: increase capacity & access to local food

\$116,000 Orcas Senior Center: nutrition, transportation, & Buddy Check-in programs for seniors

\$117,000 San Juan Agricultural Guild: increase local food production to benefit the Food Bank

\$399,005 Orcas Island Civilian Conservation Corps: A San Juan Islands Conservation District, Western Washington University & Northwest Indian College Foundation collaboration

\$107,215 Shelter Program: for neighbors lacking housing

\$5,000 Washington State University: 4-H Victory Garden

\$10,000 YMCA Camp Orkila: in-person student program



district and other sources. YMCA Camp Orkila also received a \$10,000 grant to support the outdoor education program. An additional \$209,000 was granted to support the Early Childhood Education Initiative. This funding provided more access to daycare and early childhood education programs by allowing for additional staffing and meeting other needs related to the closure of schools and increased demand for services.

Orcas Island Civilian Conservation Corp: \$399,005 in donor-directed funds were allocated for the creation of this program with the aim of providing a blended educational and job skills program for participants in their late teens and early 20's. The program has included the collaboration of Western Washington University, Washington State Parks, the San Juan Islands Conservation District and Northwest Indian College Foundation. It is now in its third year.

The Orcas Island Food Bank received \$81,200. This funding helped support expanded hours of operation, better access to locally grown and produced foods, and provision of other services, all of which helped meet the dramatically increased need for Food Bank support in the community, which nearly tripled in the first months of the pandemic. A portion of this funding also supported local businesses by providing for the purchase of fresh bread products from island bakeries and meals prepared by local restaurants. In addition, \$117,000 was granted to the San Juan Agricultural Guild to support the efforts of four Orcas Island farms to significantly increase the availability of locally grown food at the Food Bank.

Orcas Senior Center: \$116,000 was granted to supported nutrition programs, transportation services and the Buddy Check-In program for Seniors. With this support, these volunteer-based programs were able to provide home delivery of food and medications to Seniors and other at-risk island residents. At the program's height, over 700 meals per month were being delivered. As part of the Buddy Check-In program, volunteers contacted every island resident over the age of 65 to ask how they were coping with the challenges of the pandemic.

Shelter Program Funding: \$107,215 was provided to help meet the pandemic-related needs of the island's homeless population, including provision of temporary shelter, counseling and other related services. The program provided full shelter for six unhoused individuals and paid for physical property repairs providing basic hygiene and cooking facilities for fifteen families residing in deficient housing.

Orcas Center Grants totaling \$25,310 supported the creation of safety videos for domestic and frontline workers. Preparation of these videos involved several other organizations and businesses, and they were well-received in the community. Orcas Center was also the host site for many of the vaccine clinics that were held on the island. CERF Funding provided for the hiring of local musicians to perform and provide background entertainment during these events.

Economic Recovery and Resiliency Discussions: A grant of \$10,000 was allocated to provide for the cost of facilitating this community-based initiative in the summer of 2020. This allocation was supplemented by an additional \$15,000 grant from OICF discretionary funds.

Island Rides: \$9,875 was granted to this local business for the acquisition of an electric vehicle to support senior transportation services, home delivery of meals and prescriptions, etc. Throughout the pandemic, Island Rides has provided hundreds of free rides and deliveries to island residents.

Washington State University Extension: \$5,000 in funding supported 4-H facilitation of victory gardens. 16 families participated in this program.

Orcas Island Farmers Market Association: \$778 was allocated to subsidize the costs of signage, sanitation stations, and other COVID precautions related to reopening the Saturday Farmers Market in the Spring of 2021.

OVERSIGHT

With the tremendous response to the launch of the Community Emergency Response Fund (CERF), it quickly became apparent to the OICF Board of Trustees that additional care and attention needed to be given to how this new initiative fit with the overall mission and priorities of the organization.

In early Spring and continuing through the summer of 2020, the Board began to meet on a weekly rather than monthly basis. At every meeting, the agenda included a review and discussion of recent CERF activity.

From his perspective as a member of both the CERF advisory committee and the OICF Board, Berto Gandara shared the following perspective:

“The reality is that these were all organizations that we (OICF) were already involved with. We knew everybody already, we knew the community, and there was no one who popped up like, ‘I created a non-profit for the pandemic so can you give me some money?’ So that was good, but nevertheless, there was also an understanding that suddenly we were shifting gears and giving money in a different way, so at least for me as a Board member, there was also a sense of needing to say, ‘hey, wait a



minute, let's make sure we're clear on what we're doing.' And I think we did a pretty good job of that."

In late April 2020, Board Chair Judy Scott prepared a memorandum for the OICF Board that considered the ramifications of this new direction in the Foundation's support for the community. As 'food for thought', the memorandum summarized four steps that the emergency relief effort had taken in the first several weeks of the crisis: 1) mobilizing emergency resources to equip and stabilize services, 2) fostering a communications and collaboration hub, 3) helping 'our island neighbors' survive the economic downturn, and 4) sheltering the homeless on a temporary basis. The memorandum also suggested that the appropriate role of OICF in emergency situations should be to 'stabilize', 'catalyze' and 'seize the moment'. This memorandum played a valuable role in helping to shape the Board's understanding of the appropriate OICF response to the pandemic.

It was also out of these frequent discussions that the grant assessment rubric was established for the use of CERF funds. Susan Singleton was an instrumental board member in this regard. Singleton joined the OICF Board in 2017 and was the Chair of the Foundation's Grants Committee when the pandemic began. At that time, planning for the Spring GiveOrcas campaign was just getting underway and Singleton, along with Kate Long (then OICF Grants Director) took the lead in considering how that campaign might be affected by the creation of the CERF. After working through that issue, Singleton was invited to join the CERF committee, where she was involved in establishing the criteria for assessing grants requests.

NUMEROUS LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communications by the Community Foundation also played a significant role in the overall success of the Covid response. These efforts reflected Hilary Canty's belief, uniformly shared by the OICF Board, that a high level of transparency in the sharing of information was important for the community in various ways.

Providing information to the public through local media was one element of this effort. From March 2020 through December 2020, Canty authored at least 20 stories providing updates and information about the community response to Covid appeared in local online and print media. These stories provided current information about programs, updates on the level of financial support for CERF, sharing of opportunities to offer financial or volunteer support, and expressions of appreciation to those who were involved in the community response.

These media releases were complemented by Hilary's Updates — a weekly email that Canty began in 2017 that is emailed to subscribers and posted as a blog on the Community Foundation website. Throughout the pandemic, Canty has used these weekly updates to provide encouragement, reflect on events, and share useful information.

As one donor and community benefactor shared, "(There are) so many good stories in Hilary's emails. Most have no policy implications but provide examples of boots on the ground help to those in need of help. In difficult moments, Hilary's emails were filled with hope and encouragement."

From March 2020 through November 2020, she also did a series of 15 Facebook Live presentations. Beginning on March 25th with a greeting 'from my new office' (a repurposed bedroom at her home), Canty referred to all that had occurred in the early days of the pandemic and described the early response to meeting the needs of the community. As with the weekly emails and media releases, these Facebook live events provided a mix of information, inspiration, appreciation, and encouragement. Canty was also holding weekly calls with the Foundation's Cornerstone donors, and regular conversations with representatives of other Community Foundations from around the region where they would share their experiences and insights.

In addition to the online meetings and conversations that originated with the Community Foundation, there were other networks that developed, including a weekly call organized by the San Juan County Department of Health and Community Services that brought together service providers and others from around the county to share information. The County's Department of Emergency Management also issued a series of "Hot Topic" media releases authored by Brendan Cowan that provided updates on Public Health topics and other Covid-related issues.

In many ways, these combined efforts were complementary. They provided community members with the information necessary to make informed decisions about how to protect themselves as well as offering ways of participating in the overall Covid-response effort.

"(There are) so many good stories in Hilary's emails. Most have no policy implications but provide examples of boots on the ground help to those in need of help. In difficult moments, Hilary's emails were filled with hope and encouragement."

EVERYONE

belongs

2019



TODOS SON

bienvenidos aquí

COMMUNITY CHECK-IN CALLS

There were other communications that were interactive in structure and provided for collaboration among the various organizations and individuals involved in the overall Covid response. The most appreciated of these is clearly the ‘community check-in’ calls that began early in the pandemic response and continue down to the present day.

These Zoom-based gatherings were another initiative that was begun by Canty. Her initial thought was that the calls would be a useful way of sharing information and working collaboratively, but they very quickly became much more than that to those who participated. Within a short time, they became an online gathering place where participants could share their needs, frustrations, fears, and successes.

Several participants shared a story of an interaction that happened very early on that seemed to help establish an underpinning for future calls. A local hospice nurse who was on the call expressed a concern about the lack of personal protective equipment that was available to those making home visits. As she was sharing this, Brian Moss, the pastor at the Orcas Community Church realized that one way to meet this need might be to use funds that had been donated to the Church for Covid relief by a recently retired nurse. He spoke up and offered the support of the church in paying for the cost of PPE materials. This led to the organizing of several work parties at the Odd Fellows Hall where a cadre of volunteers gathered and made the necessary equipment. This was just one of many instances where a person shared a problem and the participants collectively arrived at a solution.

Another example of collaboration involved the Orcas Food Bank, Orcas Community Church, Camp Orkila and Orcas Center. The Food Bank did not have the cold and dry storage facilities needed to preserve all the additional food that was coming to the island to meet community needs. After raising the issue during a check-in call, the above-mentioned organizations indicated that they would be able to provide the necessary cold storage space until a more permanent solution could be found. Community Church Senior Pastor Brian Moss shared how the Church was able to make its basement meeting hall available because the Church was otherwise closed:

“We were not able to use our building the same way as we had been, so when the Food Bank had questions about where are additional places we can store things,

we had our whole basement level available and we said this is yours until further notice. And so, basically, the entire basement level of the church became a food bank annex. And I mean, it was completely full.”

A third example involved the establishment of a community victory garden at Opal Commons. The existing community garden was underutilized and when the question of where several LatinX families might set-up a shared garden arose at one of the weekly check-in calls, the possibility of their using some of the available garden space at Opal Commons was suggested. Elly Hoague was a participant in this call, and she offered to take the lead in bringing the families, the neighborhood, and the local 4H group together to discuss possibilities and things quickly fell into place.

These are just a handful of the many stories of collaboration that had their origin in one or another of these weekly gatherings.

These community calls were not always free of tension. There were times when the fraying of nerves and the unrelenting stress of the unknown course of the pandemic led to some sharp exchanges. Even those who critiqued certain aspects of these calls acknowledged their overall value and benefit. Many of those who were interviewed for this report spontaneously brought up these check-in calls and shared how valuable they were. For most, these weekly check-ins held a meaning that went well beyond their immediate purpose of sharing information. At a deeper level, these weekly online gatherings also provided moments of consolation and healing. These calls have clearly served as a valued online gathering place for many throughout the course of the pandemic.



VOLUNTEER COORDINATION

Prior to the beginning of the pandemic, OICF already had a well-established practice of helping to direct potential volunteers to organizations in need. With the arrival of Covid, there was a surge in the number of people who were offering to volunteer and support the community response in whatever ways they could.

In response, OICF set-up a website, orcasrecovers.org, to help match volunteers with needs. According to several of those interviewed, the website served a valuable purpose. It was managed by Megan Neal, OICF's Grants and Community Engagement manager, with support from OICF Board member Joe Thoron. In recounting the role the website played in the early days of the pandemic, Neal shared that, (There were up to) 200 or 300 volunteers on the website. Nonprofits could come to the website and say, 'I need help with this', and then I could filter through the volunteers and connect people. It worked really well. People really wanted to help. Pretty much anyone who I asked, "can you help do this?", said yes. It was really helpful and that initial response of connecting people to services when so many people were afraid, I mean, there was so much fear and panic, so it was nice to be able to have people feel needed and have people feel like they were doing something good. And people also felt like they were being taken care of by their neighbors.

This dramatic increase in usage of the website also revealed shortcomings in the off-the-shelf software being utilized by OICF that had not previously been apparent. While the program was functional, Neal said that it was also labor intensive, and it gradually became easier for volunteers to connect directly with the various social service organizations that were looking for volunteers.

After roughly four months of imposed isolation, people were eager for any opportunity to interact with others. There were also many ideas generated, some of which have continued to percolate and gather momentum.

THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY INITIATIVE

By mid-April 2020, the Covid situation seemed to have reached an initial inflection point. While it was apparent that Covid would continue to cause disruptions, Washington State had initiated a four phase reopening process and San Juan County seemed to be on the brink of moving to Phase 3. In retrospect, this can be seen as the first of many apparent turning points in the pandemic that did not proceed as anticipated.

In anticipation that the community would be gradually coming out of the pandemic, discussions at the OICF Board and among members of the CERF committee began to include consideration of steps that could be taken that would help to meet the long term needs of the island community. Initially, these discussions were focused on the question of what might succeed the work of the Shelter Group in attempting to meet the needs of the homeless.

Out of these conversations, the idea of organizing a series of facilitated community conversations came to the fore. With further discussion, this broadened into a wider focus on the future island economy and came to be known as the Orcas Island Economic Recovery and Resiliency (ER&R) project. While there were a few voices that expressed reservations with proceeding, in early May, a NW-based consulting firm – the Pomegranate Center – was hired to coordinate the process. It was strongly felt that ideas for future investment in the community should emanate from the community itself and that this public conversation was a way to accomplish that.

The ER&R project was first announced publicly in a May 29, 2020, media release, and meetings began in early July. Between the time that the project was first envisioned and its rollout, the State's four phase re-opening process stalled as Covid cases increased and the killing of George Floyd occurred. With Floyd's death, what had been intended as a focused conversation regarding the future economy of the island also became an intense consideration of local and national social and racial justice issues and the importance of engaging the diversity of the community.

As the initial meetings got underway, it quickly became apparent that the consulting firm's impressive track record of facilitating large interactive in-person community gatherings did not translate well to a Zoom-based setting. Instead the process evolved into a series of small group discussions being led by well-intentioned, but

sometimes insufficiently trained volunteers. As a result, there was little uniformity of approach across the many meetings and no clear or obvious methodology to take the over 500 recommendations that came out of the meetings and whittle them down to a manageable set of action items. In all, more than 25 meetings were held and over 200 people participated in the conversations that took place.

In any major endeavor (such as organizing a community-wide response to a pandemic), there will almost certainly be occasional missteps. This is particularly true when there is so much that is uncertain about the future course of events. With the perspective gained by the passage of time and ongoing accumulation of pandemic related twists and turns, it is apparent that launching this well-intentioned initiative in the summer of 2020 was poorly timed. Introducing a community-wide forum on top of all that was already happening would have been challenging even if everything had gone smoothly. As it was, the lack of effective facilitation and the stressful demands that coordinating the project put on those most involved resulted in this project falling short of the intended outcome.

Despite these shortcomings, it should also be noted that many who participated in the discussions expressed appreciation for having had the opportunity to share their thoughts and participate. After roughly four months of imposed isolation, people were eager for any opportunity to interact with others. There were also many ideas generated, some of which have continued to percolate and gather momentum. So, in this sense there were certainly beneficial aspects. Perhaps the most significant detrimental consequence was that it contributed to many of those who were most directly involved becoming overwhelmed and exhausted in what was already a highly demanding situation.

More information on the Economic Recovery and Resilience Project is available in an October 2020 report prepared by OICF at <https://bit.ly/3HoTnTY>



TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER

As has been previously discussed, the presence of seasoned leadership at both the Board and staff level at OICF, as well as the existence of trust-based relationships among the key players in the non-profit and broader community, were critical factors in the community's capacity to form a capable response to the pandemic. This was truly a collective effort that called on the skills and competencies of all who were involved.

It is also true that things would have been quite different without Hilary Canty's leadership. Virtually everyone involved agrees that Canty played an indispensable role in organizing the community response and that 'it couldn't have happened without her'. She saw the need to respond and immediately brought to bear her abilities and the resources of the Community Foundation.

One person referred to Hilary and OICF as 'the lighthouse' that was able to bring people together and provide a sense of connection and solidarity that was incredibly valuable. Another said that, "because of the years she's been here and the role she's played in the community, I think Hilary played a key role and has been a really dynamic leader in bringing people together during Covid." Another shared that 'without Hilary, I'm not sure what would have happened.' Canty herself shared a perception that, in some larger sense, perhaps it was this crisis that she had been preparing herself and the Community Foundation for since becoming Executive Director of the organization in 2007.

Nevertheless, the level of effort that was required to play this role took a significant toll. In several of our conversations, Canty shared that by mid-summer of 2020, she had reached a point of exhaustion. Her experience is reflective of the challenges that many others in demanding positions have experienced during the pandemic. Many of those who were interviewed for this report shared that there were times when they also felt overwhelmed by the intense demands on their time and energy.

With Covid, there was also a significant level of disorientation, as many of the social structures that are often taken for granted were disrupted and no longer in place. Offices were closed and people were suddenly working from home. There were also staff members and volunteers who were affected by the closure of the schools and had to find ways to balance the needs of their family with their work-related responsibilities.

It is also apparent that the time demands on those most directly involved in the community response were considerable. One quantifiable example was the dramatic growth in the number of meetings that were being scheduled. The OICF Board, for example, shifted from monthly to weekly meetings. In addition, the CERF committee was meeting at least twice a week, there were the weekly check-in calls, not to mention the flood of individual conversations and meetings necessary to coordinate the response.

All of this was in addition to the dramatic reorientation that was required because people were no longer able to meet in person. Although it is considered commonplace now, when Covid arrived very few people had arranged or participated in an online meeting. Some of those who were interviewed said that in addition to their other responsibilities, they were attending an additional 8 to 10 online meetings a week in the early months of the pandemic.

For many, it was necessary to become competent with other technologies. Canty described, for example, the challenges that arose out of an early decision at the Community Foundation to convert to Google Workplace at the beginning of the pandemic because it seemed like a better option for sharing documents while working from home. Eventually the conversion did prove useful, but throwing in a new software learning curve in the midst of everything else that was going on also consumed valuable time and added another layer of stress.

The mental health challenges that have arisen during Covid have been widely documented. These include high levels of burnout and exhaustion, especially among those most directly involved in responding to the challenges that presented themselves. In any challenging situation, particularly one that persists over an extended period, there is the potential for depression and exhaustion caused by prolonged demands and stress. In a small community such as Orcas, it is also true that one can find themselves not only conceptualizing and coordinating the response to a situation, but also directly participating in implementing the agreed-upon solution.

One of the challenges for future crises will be to develop ways of providing respite to those who are at risk of being overextended by the demands of the time. From a governance perspective, this may be a responsibility that rests with an organization's board of directors, or there may be some other way to address it that involves consultation with appropriate mental health professionals. In any case, it is an essential matter to continuously attend to and be aware of.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Having one organization be the lighthouse in the community storm was very helpful. That was the right thing to do. To bring people together and do the check-ins, provide necessary funding and create the solidarity that was created was hugely valuable.

This report was commissioned to assess the early days of the community response to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic on Orcas Island through the prism of the Orcas Island Community Foundation. The information and reflections that shape this report have been gathered through interviews with many of the individuals who were directly involved in supporting, organizing, coordinating, and leading that community response. Additional information was gathered through a thorough review of relevant documentation provided by the Community Foundation.

As has been discussed throughout the report, the response of the Community Foundation, other social service organizations, and the community as a whole, was remarkably successful, both in terms of the overwhelming financial support provided by donors and in the range of programs and services that were funded to provide assistance to families in need as a result of the dislocations caused by the pandemic. The overall effort was remarkably successful in assuring that the island's social safety net provided necessary support to those whose lives had been most dramatically disrupted by the pandemic.

In finding ways to meet the challenge of the time as it arose, the people of Orcas Island can look back with appreciation and ahead with an awareness that they are capable of also meeting the challenges of the future.

We've learned about our community's ability to step up in times of stress. And I just think it has to give us a great sense of accomplishment and confidence that we can do it again if necessary.



APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of People Interviewed for this Report

Much of the research that was done for this report was based on interviews with the key individuals who found themselves in leadership positions in organizing and coordinating the community response on Orcas Island. Several representatives of San Juan County government were also interviewed. These interviews were generally about an hour in length and were based on a core set of questions intended to provide insight into the topics addressed in the report.

With many thanks to those who agreed to be interviewed:

Amanda Sparks	Orcas Food Bank, Executive Director
Berto Gandara	Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Rector; OICF, Trustee; CERF, Committee Member; Food Bank, Board Member
Bob Morris	Food Bank, Board Chair; OPAL, Board Member
Brian Moss	Orcas Community Church, Senior Pastor; CERF, Committee Member; OICF, Trustee
Cindy Wolf	San Juan County, Council Member
Dimitri Stankovich	Orcas Center, Executive Director
Ed Andrews	OICF, Past Trustee; OICF, Staff Member: Communications
Erin O'Dell	OCRC, Executive Director; CERF, Committee Member
Hilary Canty	OICF, Executive Director; CERF, Committee Member
Jami Mitchell	San Juan County, Senior Services Specialist
Janet Brownell	Orcas Island Education Foundation; OICF, Past Trustee
Janet Ketcham	CERF Donor; OICF Cornerstone
Jen Wallace	OICF Staff, Finance
Joe Brotherton	CERF Donor; Doe Bay Resort, Owner
Judy Scott	OICF, Board Chair; OCRC, Board Member; CERF, Committee Member
Julie Brunner	OPAL, Housing Director

Kevin Ranker	CERF, Non-voting Committee Member; Food Bank, Interim Executive Director
Lena Kassa	Senior Center, Operations Manager
Lisa Byers	OPAL, Executive Director, CERF, Committee Member
Lynnette Woods	OICF, Trustee; Orcas Senior Center, Board Chair
Mark Tompkins	San Juan County, Director of Health & Community Services
Megan Neal	OICF Staff, Grants & Community Engagement
Michael 'Mikey' McGregor	Homeless Liaison
Rick Hughes	San Juan County, Former County Council Member
Steve Jung	OCRC, Board Member; OICF, Former Board Chair
Susan McBain	Orcas Food Bank, Board Member and Past Board Chair
Susan Singleton	OICF, Trustee; CERF, Committee Member

Appendix B: OICF Board of Trustees & CERF Committee Members

OICF Board of Trustees

Angela Foster
 Berto Gándara
 Brian Moss
 Haley Cruz Winchell
 Jeff Pietsch
 Joe Thoron, Secretary
 Judy Scott, Chair
 Lisa Steckley
 Lynnette Wood, 1st Vice-President
 Marcia West, Treasurer
 Mary Clure
 Paul Sheridan
 Stephanie DeVaan
 Stephen Bentley
 Susan Alter, 2nd Vice-President
 Susan Singleton

Community Emergency Response Fund Committee

Berto Gandara	Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Rector; OICF, Trustee; Food Bank, Board Member
Brian Moss	Orcas Community Church, Senior Pastor; OICF, Trustee
Erin O'Dell	OCRC, Executive Director
Hilary Canty	OICF, Executive Director
Judy Scott	OICF, Board Chair; OCRC, Board Member
Kevin Ranker	Food Bank, Interim Executive Director
Lisa Byers	OPAL, Executive Director
Susan Singleton	OICF, Trustee

Appendix C – Judy Scott Memorandum (excerpt) & CERF Rubric

THOUGHT PIECE ON NEXT STEPS AT OICF (4/24/2020) – EXTRACT

As we grapple with the challenges facing our Orcas community during the pandemic, I know a number of you are thinking about the role of OICF in this moment in history and our future. While it's been really helpful to have our weekly Monday Board zoom meetings, I recognize the hour has been consumed by a run-down of activity reports, and we've lacked an adequate opportunity to discuss one topic in depth or air concerns or ideas. A number of you have shared your reflections with Hilary and/or me about this. Those conversations have prompted me to write this "thought" piece in the hope it might be helpful in promoting Board discussion on Monday.

SHORT-TERM INITIATIVES – WE MOVED QUICKLY

1. Mobilizing Emergency Resources to Equip & Stabilize Services: People & Money

We've done a remarkable job in meeting the short-term goal of creating and mobilizing a new Community Emergency Response Fund (CERF). To date, CERF has raised at least \$515,734 from 336 donors. The Board quickly approved a community advisory committee to review and recommend the grants from CERF, and this committee has met twice a week so funds are disbursed to the organizations in need immediately as requested. To date, \$445,200 has been distributed via 23 grants.

The CERF focus is on “identifying and supporting those organizations on Orcas who are assisting this island’s population who are at risk of not meeting the basic needs for housing, medical care, food and other essential items.” It’s no surprise that the main recipients of these funds so far are the Food Bank, Orcas Senior Center, OPAL and OCRC.

These funds were augmented by the successful and redesigned GiveOrcas Campaign, which raised an additional \$229,500.

Our Orcas.Recovers.Org mobilized people power, by setting up an immediate and effective way to harness the generosity of Orcas community members who wanted to volunteer for a wide variety of services and to identify the needs of organizations for volunteers. This is an ongoing operation that has played a unifying role on our island.

By taking the lead and acting swiftly, OICF provided the community with a single point of action for resource investment, allowing our Orcas network of organizations to focus on their own missions from the get-go.

2. Fostering a Communications/Collaboration Hub

OICF acted quickly to provide a much-needed communications and collaboration hub between non-profit organizations, the county government and informal response projects — all of whom were scrambling to respond to the pandemic and figuring out how to meet a broad array of unexpected demands.

Each Wednesday morning, Hilary hosts the Wednesday morning zoom “community check-in” calls, where people from across the island’s organizational world can share what they are doing and what they need, and identify gaps that should be filled. Hilary (and OICF by proxy) is the trusted convener of this growing network. The weekly conversation has acted to calm fears, inspire collaboration, avoid reinventing the wheel, unite efforts and most importantly, reassure these community groups that they aren’t in this crisis alone.

One small example of how this network is effective happened during this week’s call, when someone working with our Spanish-speaking community raised the need for community garden space and materials so that families without access to land can raise their own food. This call for help resulted in a number of people coming forward who are working on Food Security issues and the farming community, and by the end of the call, useful connections were made and potential garden sites identified.

In addition, Hilary’s Friday Facebook talk has helped get out the message about community projects to a broader audience and the Monday Cornerstone Call has helped keep our most ardent supporters in the loop.

3. Helping Our Island Neighbors Survive the Economic Downturn

Our OICF Economic Tracking task force has explored the most effective way to support small businesses. They are in the process of working out a way for the Public Library to use its resources and researchers to assist small businesses in accessing government benefits.

The OICF Task Force on Mental Health Directory is exploring how to support efforts to identify mental health services for our island community.

The OICF GiveOrcas campaign provided immediate support, both financial and emotional to the 13 organizations who were involved in the effort and to the 650+ donors who were given the opportunity to help the programs they find essential.

4. Sheltering the Homeless on a Temporary Basis

As soon as Moran State Park and the Public Library closed (along with OCRC and Compass Health offices), our community members who lack stable housing and are frequently dealing with mental health challenges as well, had nowhere to turn for housing, hygiene and a safe location to shelter in place. Unfortunately, the County was simply unable to respond to the need for alternative housing. Rather than leave people wandering the island in this unacceptable situation, Hilary and the CERF Team stepped in, and OICF helped birth the “Shelter Group,” an informal coalition of representatives from OICF, OCRC, OPAL and the County to figure out where and how to provide temporary shelter to these individuals during the Governor’s order (and hopefully, a 60 days transition period).

This effort has revealed the serious issues behind homelessness and a call for a long-term solution on Orcas.

LONG-TERM PLANNING

As food for thought, I propose these ideas about OICF’s multifaceted role going forward. I know you will have other ideas and insights.

I see our role through the following lens:

STABILIZE: We want to make sure our essential non-profit organizations continue to have the resources they need to support our community. This goal requires a fund-raising program where donors see the concrete results of their contributions and are inspired to do more.

CATALYZE: We want to convene community conversations about long-term problems that the pandemic has revealed on Orcas, and sponsor community-

based task forces to formulate solutions; problems like homelessness and inadequate mental health services. In this scenario, OICF would not be the ultimate entity for implementing the solution plan. Instead OICF would be an active player in making sure that the key groups and individuals are at the table and receive the necessary support for tackling their assignment.

SEIZE THE MOMENT: We want to be open and flexible to evaluating and, if appropriate, nurturing an opportunity for a major community improvement project that may fall outside our usual endeavors but now be possible because a significant donor is ready to act.

RATINGS FOR CERF GRANTS

Criterion	Strength/ Referent of Criterion	Score			Rating
		5	3	1	
A. Ability to reach a large portion of our most vulnerable community with essential services – housing, medical care & food	5 = clearly able 1 = clearly not able	Clearly meeting essential needs for 50+ people	Meeting essential needs for 20-50 people	Meeting essential needs for under 20 people	
B. Ability to offer COVID related services or recovery from COVID impact on services	5 = adaptable, 1 = not adaptable	Currently meeting local needs & can grow	Willing to adapt to meet local needs	Not clear if able/ wiling to change	
C. Ability to scale services	5 = scalable, 1 = not scalable	Clear evidence of ability to expand	Probably able to upscale	Unwilling or unable to upscale	
D. Ability to work with partners	5 = demonstrated capability, 1 = unclear capability	Currently collaborating with partners in sector	Probably able to collaborate locally	Unwilling or unable to collaborate	
E. Promote change/recovery towards diversity	5 = significant impact, 1 = does no harm	Clearly contributes to diversity	May contribute to diversity	Does not harm to equity & diversity	
F. Feasibility for success	5 = good, 1 = unclear	Slam dunk	Possible	Many barriers	
Total Score					

If you'd like to learn more or have questions, call or email Hilary at (360) 376-6423 or hilary@oicf.us.

**ORCAS ISLAND
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

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OICF is a 501(c)(3) organization
EIN: 91-1680527

This report was prepared by Minor Lile. Interviews and additional research began in the Fall of 2021 and continued through early 2022. The report was written in the Spring and Fall of 2022.