

Rep. Cheri Helt's office reached out today with a request for an update on NeighborImpact's response to and challenge arising from the current public health emergency. Simultaneously, Sen. Merkley's office reached out with a request for what federal assistance might need to be included in a federal relief package making its way through Congress. Rather than answer everyone separately, I thought I would share information with all. Here's a high level summary:

1. Business operations mostly continue as usual, except for our Head Start classrooms, which are closed in conjunction with the Governor's public school closure. Reopening is targeted for April 6, but likely will be extended, based on yesterday's announcement of a 4-week closure of public schools.
2. Head Start closure affects 445 children and their families. Head Start management is still working; Head Start line staff are being paid during the shutdown. Some Head Start line staff are being redeployed to backfill other programs.
3. Food bank is still operating. We have plenty of food to distribute, due to the release of additional commodities through the federal TEFAP program in association with the President's national emergency declaration. We could also use additional volunteers at the regional food bank to re-pack federal bulk deliveries. Our 55 food partner agencies until today have been operating, although we are beginning to see closure notices as disproportionately elderly volunteers begin self-isolating. Should we lose all pantries in a given community, we are prepared to operate large-scale distribution from trucks. Local school districts (Bend, Redmond and Crook County that I know of) are opening or have opened supplemental feeding programs for children. We are concerned about the eventual impact on seniors as senior congregant meal sites shut down. Meals on Wheels continues to operate.
4. Winter warming shelters are beginning to close due to disproportionately elderly volunteers self-isolating. Bethlehem Inn, the area's largest transitional shelter, has stopped taking new intakes. The operation of the Bend winter warming shelter operated by NeighborImpact has been extended by Deschutes County (which owns the facility) beyond its planned closure of March 16 to April 16. The shelter capacity is 48 and we have been full nightly. The unique guest count at the shelter is 255 since Dec. 15. We are prioritizing moving elderly and disabled clients (about 15 percent of the population) to hotels and motels. Able-bodied adults will be transitioned to outside shelter via issuance of tents, 0-rated sleeping bags, tarps and propane heaters. We have written to OHCS and the governor recommending the opening of local armories as day shelters for the homeless, since the usual shelter spots—libraries, fast food and coffee shops—are closing. The homeless need access to relief from the cold, recharge stations for phones, triage for medical needs and hygiene facilities.
5. Demand for housing assistance is very high. We have waiting lists for motel vouchering and short-term rental assistance. We have no funds available for rapid rehousing. We have immediate need for more of all these resources.
6. In reference to the above, we have no clear understanding of the Governor's order and how it may affect homeless shelters, food pantries and distribution and other emergency response sites. They are not exempted from the 25-person limit as we understand it. There is an immediate need for clarification on this issue.
7. Our energy assistance program is operating. Staff have prepared to work remotely. We are using technology to connect with clients and eliminate paper exchange as much as possible. A pending suspension of the state manual governing processing of applications for the Oregon Energy Assistance Program will be helpful. It would be further helpful if the corresponding federal LIHEAP manual were suspended. Disconnects by utilities have been suspended, easing the demand for crisis payments to restore service. However, we anticipate an increase in

demand as the public health emergency recedes. We anticipate being asked for additional direct-payments to assist with propane purchases as the homeless shelters close and the homeless revert to outdoor living.

8. Our weatherization program continues to function. We stop in-home work by week's end, but staff will continue to prepare audits to allow for restart once the public health emergency recedes.
9. Our representative payee function continues to operate, paying bills for adults too mentally or physically compromised to pay their own way.
10. Our lending program is open, although there is very limited demand.
11. Our home ownership center is operating. We have moved to on-line instruction and instructed staff to work from home. We anticipate a surge in demand related to increased foreclosure activity and need for mortgage payment assistance as the public health emergency recedes and the impact of economic slowdown hits.
12. Our Childcare Resources division is operating, assisting childcare providers with developing infrastructure and expanding availability. We do not offer direct childcare, however, oddly, we are receiving great pressure from the Early Learning Division and others to consider reopening our Head Start sites as temporary childcare centers. This is odd. If collecting children and serving them in a childcare setting is OK, why are our Head Start centers closed? If we are encouraging self isolation, why is the state encouraging other than self-isolation? This is somewhat difficult to explain to the public. Notwithstanding that apparent contradiction, we are polling our Head Start staff to see who is willing and able to step in to provide childcare in temporary facilities or as substitutes for center-based care.
13. I am deeply concerned about the impact of the present crisis on local fundraising several months from now. We need to raise approximately \$750,000 annually to sustain the operation of our food bank and home ownership center. With the market down 30 percent or more, we are concerned about ability to attract grants and charitable giving. Short-term public support of these operations may be necessary to prevent future disruption.
14. We could easily deploy \$1 million in flexible cash to serve immediate needs over the next 90 days, of which at least half would be deployed to housing assistance. Mostly likely vehicles for deployment are the Community Services Formula Block grant (which is flexible funding deployed by formula throughout the state) and the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) which can be used flexibly to meet housing and food assistance and other needs. On the federal side, we would love to see eviction-prevention dollars increased for local continuums of care. Additional operating dollars for food banks distributed through TEFAP would also be useful as would dollars distributed to NeighborWorks America for redistribution through the NeighborWorks organizations. An additional allocation to LIHEAP energy assistance will be needed as things return to normal and unpaid energy assistance bills come due. An ARRA/TARP-like response of funding to respond to foreclosure and mortgage assistance will be needed as things return to normal. Useful policy actions would include increasing SNAP eligibility to 300% for one year and suspended the Able-Bodied Adults restrictions scheduled to go into place.
15. I do think it is necessary to rethink the public agency response to this crisis. The nonprofit and faith sectors are not up to the task. Their volunteers are disproportionately elderly and they are following advice to self isolate. We lack stockpiles of sanitary supplies and equipment and we do not have the balance sheets to allow us to wait for public money to flow. If this crisis is going to be managed, we will need to mobilize civils servants into doing more than write checks: The National Guard, DHS and OHA staff will need to start doing direct service.

Please contact me if you have any questions.



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Supporting People, Strengthening Communities.

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