



## Funders Briefing | Northern California Wildfires and Public Safety Power Shutoff: Who's Affected, What's Needed from Philanthropy

Tuesday, October 29, 2019  
10am – 11am PT

This webinar shared about best practices for supporting people with the least access to resources: 1) people with disabilities, 2) immigrants and farm workers, 3) low-income residents, and 4) older adults and seniors.

Kicking off the webinar, **Nancy Brown, Community Preparedness Manager from [Sonoma County](#)**, shared an overview of the current situation in Sonoma County.

- Currently 180,000 residents are under evacuation warning or mandatory evacuation, close to 50% of the population.
- Electricity has been out for most of the county since October 24.
- Feel blessed to have only 57 residences lost to the fire. Residents have been extremely helpful in evacuating their homes, has made a big difference.
- PG&E is facing challenges in turning power back on, the wind is causing a problem with transmission lines.
- An immediate need in getting people back into their homes is providing food, since much of their food will have gone bad by now due to power outages.
- All three hospitals in county are closed, to need to ensure services are available before repopulation begins.
- All county information and updates regarding the fire can be found at [socoemergency.org](http://socoemergency.org).

Next, **Alan Kwok, Director of Disaster Resilience from Northern California Grantmakers**, interviewed leaders on the ground of the current needs they saw unfolding in their communities.

**How is your organization responding to the needs in community? Or what needs are you seeing?**

- **Gabriela Orantes, Just Recovery Fellow, [Latino Community Foundation/North Bay Organizing Project](#)**
  - [Corazón Healdsburg](#) is a community resource center that has welcomed families and farm workers who had been evacuated. Because of the trust they built within the community, and a relationship with the Red Cross, they were able to react quickly and help people in the community.
- **Ingrid Tischer, Trustee, [Awesome Foundation Disability Chapter](#)**
  - Alameda County and Independent Living Centers (ILCs) working to aid those with disabilities. The need is high as people with disabilities face barriers in accessing transportation, housing, and food.
  - Shelters that are available through the Red Cross have recently been fully acceptable with those with disabilities.



- There is inherently a lot of intersectionality, need to keep in mind that there are many seniors/people of color with disabilities.
- Alameda County has a disproportionate amount of low- and no-income people that are not housed, who are being exposed to poor air quality.
- Independent Living in Hayward recently received 55K to distribute to people with disabilities to aid with providing batteries, chargers, etc.
  
- **Christine Paquette, Executive Director, [St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin County](#)**
  - Many residents in Marin have been without power since Saturday night
  - Currently serving 700 hot meals a day, including people usually serve and those haven't served in the San Rafael region
  - Volunteer organizations (VOADs) are active, have been running and communicating by cell several times day, making sure food is available
  - Community has been extremely resilient.
  - Thanks to the San Francisco Foundation and Marin Community Foundation for supporting and educating us to help prepare and be ready for this scenario
  
- **Susan Malardino & Julia Hales, [Marin Center for Independent Living](#)**
  - Have seen an over 70% influx in calls, there is a lack of infrastructure and support for the elderly. Communication, transportation and infrastructure is not here, Marin needs support to plan for disasters now and in the future.
  - Have access to funding from PG&E, but distribution to Independent Living came late
  - Need support to be able provide backup batteries, oxygen tanks, etc.
  - Need staffing across cultural lines and resources to respond to people with disabilities.

### **How have the fires and power challenge come up with new challenges?**

- **Gabriela** - Leaders of the community have made sure there's been adequate communication, but it has taken them away from the work they are already doing.
  - There is still a lack of infrastructure to react in a collaborative way to reach vulnerable populations, but there has been a more collaborative approach due to lessons learned from previous fires.
  
- **Ingrid** – Many issues have been here for a long time, but have reached a new height due to income inequality.
  - There is a lack of shelter overall. Not all emergency shelters are accessible to people with disabilities. That brings a lack of trust to people in this community. Important to focus on grassroots and volunteer groups and provide peer support. People need to know a resource exists and how to access it or it won't be used. Infrastructure and communication are under resourced. Also need to



focus on systems level reform.

- **Christine** – Need to focus on agencies and nonprofits that have not been involved in this work, need to get them up to speed.
  - Also, needs to have a formal debrief, that is technical, need to learn what we need and how are we going to grow from this and be more prepared for the next fire.
- **Susan and Julia** - Incredible opportunity for people to learn and grow from this experience. Need to think about those who are most vulnerable.
  - Need infrastructure to work on cohesive messaging and outreach.

### Moving forward, what should people know?

- **Gabriela** – Partnership with Northern California Wild Fire and Latino Community Foundation was reactivated, but was originally developed after 2017 fires. The same challenges that existed then, still exist now, language barriers being a big one. Latino Community Foundation is working with organizations who are on the ground and have trust with the community. Grassroots organizations are best designed to give funding to community members who are in need.
- **Ingrid** – Need to trust in organizations on the ground.
  - Funders need to focus on how to provide practical support within system they have and think about how your organization can match resources that organizations or companies are already providing for emergency work.
  - ILC Healdsburg has bandwidth to give funding.
  - Important to have emergency funding, so organizations are able to reach quickly.
- **Christine** – Need to target people in the community that lack resources, especially those who need electricity for their medical equipment.
  - Encourage funders to make the most of this opportunity to make a robust plan for community

Participants of the webinar asked the following questions, which Alan Kwok will follow up on after the webinar.

- **What are the volunteer skills needed for your organization?**
- **How are you tracking data? Who is using these services?**

Alan then turned to funders on the panel to share how philanthropy can make the most of their support and if there are any changes they are making in their grantmaking strategy.

- **Lisa Carreño, President & CEO, [United Way of the Wine Country](#)**



- The 2017 fires were beyond what anyone anticipated and required the county to work closer together and fundraise for recovery. The philanthropic community came together to aid the North Bay in its recovery.
  - 185K people have been evacuated and many are considered to be vulnerable, 50% + Sonoma county have special needs, 40% are low and moderate income people who have lost food, with four different power safety shut offs in the last month.
  - Philanthropy organizations need to understand scope of the need, and communicate and message that to donors who are interested in supporting.
  - There are many immediate needs, people are looking for food, because food has spoiled, looking for blankets and power back up, gas and ice.
  - Community organizations need support to get resources to people. Nimble, creative response is needed.
- **Karin Demarest, Vice President for Community Impact, [Community Foundation for Sonoma County](#)**
    - This fire is different because of the scale of evacuation. It has left people vulnerable. People have lost everything in their refrigerator, small business have been devastated, and people have missed days of work.
    - Don't anticipate have same resources from the last fire coming into the community.
    - People who are facing trauma have a hard time accessing resources. Need to release emergency funding very quickly.
    - Funders can play an advocacy role, use your influence to get other funders involved. How can we as funders address these ongoing issues with PG&E?
    - Be willing to fund disaster, even if it's not an area of focus for your organization.
- **Regine Webster, Vice President, [Center for Disaster Philanthropy](#)**
    - Need is high and will likely get higher, not yet seeing response from national funders which is concerning.
    - Four ways to be strategic:
      - 1. Take a long view – going to take time to re-immerge, be patient in disaster planning
      - 2. Recognize private philanthropy can provide unique support that government can't.
      - 3. All funders are disaster philanthropist, even if you don't support this type of work, you can always look into ways to tie disaster in your current areas of focus.
      - 4. Do research, talk to experts who are working close to those organizations on the ground.



**Kathleen Kelly Janus, Senior Advisor on Social Innovation, [Office of Governor Gavin Newsom](#)**

- It's been a privilege to see the groundswell of generosity of communities coming together and philanthropy standing together in the midst of this disaster.
- The Governor is committed to partnership to the private and philanthropic sector because he knows we need all hands on deck for these challenges.

Please contact Alan Kwok at [akwok@nccg.org](mailto:akwok@nccg.org) with any questions you have regarding this webinar.