

An Update on the Special and Urgent Needs – Irene Recovery Fund

April 2012

Irene's Impact On Vermont's Nonprofit Sector

From the moment that Tropical Storm Irene struck, Vermont's nonprofits have been at the forefront of the state's recovery process, helping residents who were affected by the storm and serving as key partners in the rebuilding of their towns; many of these organizations worked around the clock to meet a surge in demand for their services even as they recovered from damage to their own facilities.

The Community Foundation recognized that in order to provide relief to residents in the most affected parts of the state, many nonprofits that served those areas were going to need emergency funding to maintain or increase their services and repair the damage they had sustained. The Foundation established the Special and Urgent Needs (SUN)–Irene Recovery Fund for this purpose, modeled after the Foundation's original SUN Fund, which for six years has provided quick grants to nonprofits for unanticipated needs.

Information about the availability of grants was disseminated online and through the media. The SUN–Irene Recovery Fund featured a simple application and a fast turnaround on grant decisions, which were made by a committee composed of Foundation staff. The fund's first grants were awarded the week of October 2, roughly one month after the storm and two weeks after applications were made available.

Foundation staff began to realize that some of the most critical on-the-ground work was increasingly being administered by local community relief funds and

programs that offered financial assistance to individuals and families affected by the storm. Because those local funds and programs were often formed by—or affiliated with—local nonprofits, they too were subsequently allowed to apply for funding.

What The Fund Has Been Able To Accomplish

Thanks to the generosity of donors from across Vermont and beyond, the SUN–Irene Recovery Fund collected over \$420,000 in seven months, including \$100,000 gifts from TransCanada and the band Phish's WaterWheel Fund for Vermont Flood Recovery. The SUN–Irene Recovery Fund is no longer accepting additional donations and the grants committee is now focused on awarding the fund's final grants to community organizations.

As of this writing, the Foundation has received 84 applications and has awarded grants to 72 nonprofit organizations, schools, and municipal entities totaling \$362,420, with an average grant size of over \$4,700.

In the Foundation's conversations with nonprofits over the past seven months, two emerging needs in the statewide

recovery process became evident. First, as immediate needs like shelter, food, and infrastructure are dealt with, some Vermonters have turned their focus to addressing the long-term psychological effects of the storm. For example, the SUN–Irene Recovery Fund awarded grants to support expanded hours for an elementary school guidance counselor to work with students affected by the flood, as well as staff



The Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro received a grant to help repair damage caused by the storm.



Home Share Now received a grant from the fund to support the increased staff time necessary to facilitate home sharing matches for individuals and families displaced by the storm.

support for a mental health clinic facing a spike in demand for its services.

Second, it's clear that the 14 long-term recovery groups, which have been tasked with spearheading regional recovery, are strapped for resources. These groups are often formed by nonprofit, municipal, and community leaders with a detailed understanding of their area needs and a commitment to rebuilding their towns. In response, the SUN-Irene Recovery Fund is in the process of awarding grants to several of these regional recovery groups in

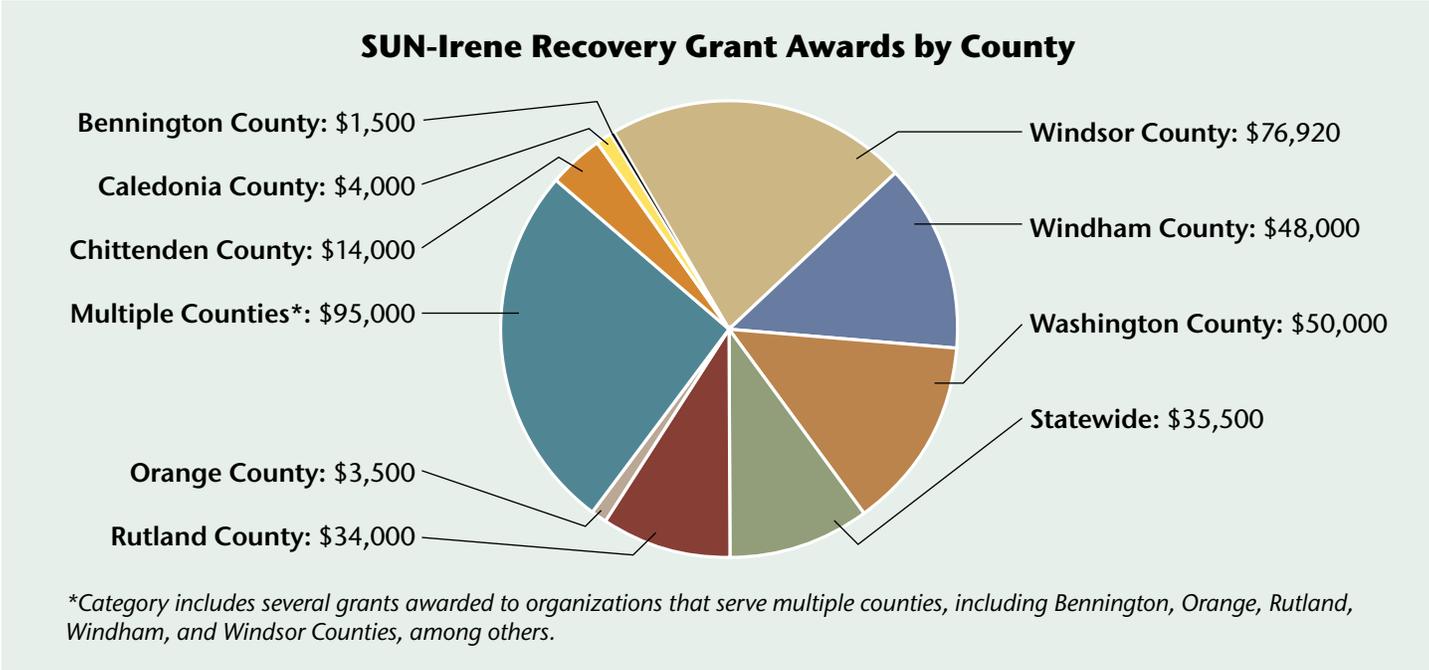
amounts proportionate to local impact and remaining need. The committee is also being mindful of those areas that sustained damage from the storm but which, for any number of reasons, have not submitted as many applications for assistance, such as Rutland, Windham, and Addison Counties.

Looking Forward: Where We Go From Here

After seven months of grantmaking, the SUN-Irene Recovery Fund is winding down. But the Foundation remains committed to supporting long-term community recovery. If your organization is still struggling to recover from the storm, we encourage you to take a look at our list of statewide Irene recovery resources on vtfloodresponse.org.

Although Irene devastated many organizations and affected hundreds of nonprofits, it is apparent that some good has come out of the past seven months. Strong new partnerships have emerged between nonprofits, residents, and municipalities; and communities across the state have renewed their commitment to support the integral work of nonprofits.

Thank you to everyone who made this work possible. And in the words of one nonprofit that received a grant from the fund, "Although there is still much work to be done, we have made tremendous progress in the clean-up effort. [...] Your support means the world to us."



To learn more about the SUN-Irene Recovery Fund and other Irene-related funds, and to read stories about nonprofits who have received grants, visit vtfloodresponse.org. You can also contact the Foundation's Jen Peterson at 802-388-3355 ext. 288.