

100 LEADERSHIP when it matters most

The James Irvine Foundation Leadership Awards have recognized 100 innovative leaders making a difference in California. Facing the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges, many of these leaders have adapted their work and continued to innovate.

Leadership Awards alumni pivot to address timely challenges in human services

The seven Leadership Award recipients featured in this brief worked in their community to help individuals and families address challenges resulting from the pandemic. Their efforts included:

- Deploying large-capacity handwashing stations and hygiene kits to support unhoused people
- Providing remote mental health care, including case management, therapy, and classes
- Distributing financial assistance such as rent, utility payments, and gift cards
- Supplying basic needs such as housing, diapers, personal protective equipment, and food
- Providing hotel vouchers, hotel rooms, and safe sleeping spaces for youth experiencing homelessness
- Launching an intergenerational vaccine corps of retired medical professionals and younger volunteers to help low-income and ethnically diverse populations get equal access to the vaccine
- Developing a new technology literacy program for young people to ease the transition to virtual learning
- Launching a youth-led and produced podcast series on policy

By highlighting the work and ideas of these leaders, the Irvine Foundation hopes to help policymakers and our peers in philanthropy advance effective solutions in human services.

Housing and homelessness



DONIECE SANDOVAL

2017 AWARD RECIPIENT

LAVAMAE^x | STATEWIDE

LavaMae^x teaches people around the world to bring mobile showers and other essential care services to the street, where their unhoused neighbors need them most. That need became even more urgent during the pandemic. When the COVID-19 crisis hit, LavaMae^x was providing service in San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles and training others in its Radical Hospitality[®] approach — meeting



people wherever they are with extraordinary care. Initially lacking personal protective equipment, the organization temporarily suspended shower service and pivoted to deliver COVID-19 hygiene kits, distributing over 8,500 of them to unhoused people in 35 locations. LavaMae^x also designed a do-it-yourself, large-capacity handwashing station, then helped deploy and support more than 600 units in 14 communities, providing over a million handwashes. This innovation was crucial for people on the streets who lost access to running water with the closure of libraries, fast food restaurants, and parks.

At the same time, LavaMae^x continued developing toolkits and training other nonprofits and grassroots organizations, helping 15 affiliates launch services that collectively reached 9,569 unhoused individuals.

Lessons Learned

Unhoused people often lack adequate access to hygiene and sanitation facilities or connection to services and health care. This was especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many public facilities closed, and direct service organizations halted operations. By providing mobile showers and handwashing stations in communities throughout the state, organizations can restore dignity to Californians experiencing homelessness and reduce the spread of diseases like COVID-19.

Policy Consideration: Local governments should invest in cross-segmental collaboration to bolster infectious disease response and prevention. In partnership with community-based organizations, local governments can adequately mitigate the spread of disease by continuing to provide access to services such as hygiene and sanitation facilities.



MARTHA RYAN

2011 AWARD RECIPIENT

HOMELESS PRENATAL PROGRAM | SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

The Homeless Prenatal Program is a nationally recognized resource center based in San Francisco, focused on transforming the lives of homeless and low-income mothers, pregnant women, and families. The center serves over 3,500 families annually, providing various programs and services to help them become healthy, stable, and self-sufficient. For homeless and at-risk families, the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated existing challenges such as food insecurity, mental health issues, substance use, and family violence. Additionally, as the pandemic intensified financial pressures, the Homeless Prenatal

Program saw a spike in need even among families that did not require assistance in the past. In response, the center expanded its services to provide remote, regular case management, therapy, workshops, classes, and emergency services. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the organization has provided a wide range of basic needs support, including paying approximately \$500,000 worth of rent and distributing about 550 food bags, 300 gift cards, and 85 care packages weekly. Other critical aid includes providing diapers, utility payments, and distributing hundreds of laptops and phones.

Lessons Learned

Many Californians, especially people of color living on a low income, are struggling to pay for necessities like housing, food, and medical care; and, in some cases, are accessing services and support for the first time. Where government support is lagging, community-based organizations are minimizing hardships by expanding their services to meet the demand for basic needs support.

Policy Consideration: Strengthen safety net programs to reduce poverty, improve Californians' wellbeing, and minimize the long-term impacts of economic crises on individuals and communities. Collaborate with community-based organizations, who know their communities best, to disseminate information about safety net programs to ensure all Californians who need the support, get it.



KIM CARTER

2018 AWARD RECIPIENT

TIME FOR CHANGE FOUNDATION |
BAY AREA AND INLAND EMPIRE

Time for Change Foundation helps women in 17 California locations transition from homelessness and incarceration to self-sufficiency by building leadership through evidence-based programs and housing. During the pandemic, Time for Change Foundation pivoted to provide tangible relief to hundreds of families, including quarantine housing, personal protective equipment, food, rental assistance, and affordable housing solutions. The organization also expanded its services for children and mothers, including mental

health support, parenting, homeschooling assistance, technological access, and childcare subsidies to working mothers. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Time for Change Foundation has helped 417 families weather job and housing loss, the transition to distance learning, and health-related challenges. Yet, due to limited resources, the organization has more than 2,000 families waiting to receive its services.

Lessons Learned

People of color, particularly those working in essential services, have been paramount in keeping the state's economy alive. Yet, many of these individuals have little to no safety net when faced with hardships. This was especially true for many moms of color who were faced with homeschooling their children when schools closed or finding affordable child care.

Policy Consideration: Incentivize collaboration between government entities and community-based organizations to provide targeted relief, such as rental assistance and child care subsidies, to the Californians who need it most.



SHERILYN ADAMS

2019 AWARD RECIPIENT

LARKIN STREET YOUTH SERVICES |
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



The COVID-19 pandemic forced Larkin Street to quickly deploy programs to protect young people's health and meet the increased demand resulting from emergency shelters closing. Larkin Street partnered with the City of San Francisco to expand its emergency hotel voucher program and converted an underutilized hotel to a temporary shelter. In partnership with the city, they also created a designated safe sleeping area where youth could stay

without fear of victimization or harassment. The space included sanitation facilities, food and water, health screenings, and access to support services. Collectively, the vouchers, hotel, and safe sleeping space provided hundreds of secure beds each night to youth experiencing homelessness and were combined with wraparound services that together contributed to their wellbeing and created stability and pathways out of homelessness. Larkin Street moved this wraparound program model - combining housing with health care, education, and employment services - online and provided socially distanced, in-person delivery methods as needed. To progress towards a future without youth homelessness, Larkin Street will continue to advocate for youth-specific funding at the federal, state, and local level. This funding ensures young people who are at-risk or have become homeless, have left school, lost employment, or have an increased need for mental health services can access the services they need and deserve.

Lessons Learned

Young people are incredibly resilient, but COVID-19 has exacerbated the existing challenges that many youth face, including housing insecurity, interrupted educations, unemployment, and mental health concerns. Furthermore, the most creative and effective solutions related to COVID-19 or otherwise come from young people with lived experience of homelessness.

Policy Consideration: Input from young people with lived experience of homelessness should be a formal component of the state's intergenerational and culturally competent human services response to the crisis. Creating youth-focused leadership opportunities, such as including youth commissioners on public boards and commissions, will add important input and insight to the work of public decision-making bodies.



EUNICE LIN NICHOLS

2019 AWARD RECIPIENT

ENCORE.ORG | STATEWIDE

Encore.org brings older and younger changemakers together to solve problems, bridge divides, and create a better future for all - a commitment that has only deepened in response to the pandemic, our country's racial reckoning, and our deep political polarization. To meet the moment, Encore.org launched an intergenerational vaccine corps of retired medical professionals and younger volunteers to help

low-income and ethnically diverse populations in the Bay Area get equal access to the vaccine. Additionally, the organization launched a virtual Gen2Gen Innovation Fellowship with 15 innovators, ranging in age from 19 to 75, who are bringing generations together to fight social isolation, expand affordable housing, strengthen the multigenerational workforce, and address pandemic-related challenges. Encore.org also launched a new podcast focused on how older and younger changemakers are coming together to solve problems; and partnered with the Stanford Social Innovation Review to share lessons learned from implementing intergenerational solutions. The organization plans to sponsor a virtual leadership summit and public livestream event in summer 2021 that will call social entrepreneurs, artists, activists, influencers, and philanthropists to the table - to inspire change, support this work at scale, and generate a better future together.

Lessons Learned

Intergenerational connections harness the best of lived experiences and future-forward thinking. Intentionally building bridges between generations on commonly experienced issues creates unique collaboration and innovation, and organizational growth.

Policy Consideration: Investing in innovation incubators that bring diverse generations together to address social issues can produce timely, creative policy solutions. As momentum builds for diversity efforts in both public and private sectors, ensuring that age is an ongoing consideration will improve the quality of solutions.



YAMMILETTE RODRIGUEZ

2019 AWARD RECIPIENT

YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE | STATEWIDE

Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) helps young people in underserved communities hone their skills to design and make decisions about the future of their own communities. Through municipal- and school-based Student Advocacy Councils, young people gain valuable experience and advance impactful public policy. As a result of the pandemic, YLI was forced to temporarily pause its



youth programming. However, after surveying youth, the organization pivoted to meet growing mental health challenges by providing care packages, hosting wellness circles for youth and families, and hosting public discussions on COVID-19 and racism. The organization also transitioned its advocacy programs and convenings online. To ensure students had access to its programming, virtual public meetings, and distance learning, YLI distributed Wi-Fi hotspots and computers to youth who expressed the need. These efforts successfully increased participation in their Student Advocacy Councils and

inspired youth to launch a self-produced podcast series titled “PolicyWise” in partnership with statewide nonprofit California Forward. Additionally, YLI’s work inspired many institutions and individuals to integrate young people into their decision-making spaces.

Lessons Learned

Young people continue to lack adequate representation in decision-making spaces. However, with access to reliable technology and internet services, young people can overcome barriers, such as transportation, to engage in decision-making processes. Additionally, young people are experiencing the disruptions of COVID-19 in ways that are often not understood or highlighted by existing media and community outlets.

Policy Consideration: Policymakers should improve access to reliable technology and internet services and create more opportunities at the local and statewide level for youth to share their experiences and influence decisions related to the pandemic and other challenges facing their communities. Consider exploring opportunities for regular reporting on broadband availability across different regions and demographics across the state.



CHARISSE BREMOND WEAVER & GEORGE WEAVER

2014 AWARD RECIPIENT

BROTHERHOOD CRUSADE | LOS ANGELES

Brotherhood Crusade improves the academic, employment, and health outcomes for people in South Los Angeles by providing comprehensive, tailored, and human-centered programs. In partnership with local businesses and community partners, Brotherhood Crusade creates pathways from K-12 education to

post-secondary to mid-level jobs by providing a wide variety of educational- and employment-based classes, mentorship, career coaching, hands-on vocational training, and career readiness opportunities. During the pandemic, Brotherhood Crusade was deemed an essential business and continued providing select services that required in-person engagement for young people and families at their three centers. The organization transitioned case management and skills development programming online. To ease the transition to virtual learning, Brotherhood Crusade provided students with laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots but quickly realized that many young people did not know how to use these technologies for educational and employment purposes. In response, Brotherhood Crusade developed a new program designed to enhance student’s technology skills. The organization also shifted vocational skills training to careers in industries anticipated to be the



most in-demand post-pandemic, such as nursing and computer technology. To support students and families to advance academically and economically, Brotherhood Crusade also provided people with cash support for food, clothing, hygiene kits, utilities, shelter, and personal protective equipment; and created peer support and counseling groups.

Lessons Learned

The pandemic has left millions of Californians unemployed. For people with barriers to employment, educational and employment programs and services must be easily accessible, human-centered, comprehensive, and responsive to their evolving needs. Further, many young people need access to and training for the technologies that are crucial to learning.

Policy Consideration: Invest in support and counseling infrastructure to ensure individuals are referred to programs that meet their needs and boost eligibility for high quality employment. Consider removing barriers, such as time commitment and ID requirements, to make it easier for people to enter education and workforce development programs.

About the Leadership Awards

The James Irvine Foundation Leadership Awards recognize leaders whose innovative solutions to critical state challenges improve people's lives, create opportunity, and contribute to a better California.

To learn more about the program or the 100 Leadership Award recipients, please visit www.IrvineAwards.org.