



Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

1. What is the San Mateo County Strong Fund?

The San Mateo County Strong Fund (SMC Strong) was established by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors on March 24, 2020 to assist individuals, families, non-profits and small businesses that have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

2. How can I donate to the fund?

Donations can be made by going to www.SMCSTRONG.org . Donations are accepted via PayPal and credit card.

3. Will all the funds be distributed in San Mateo County?

Yes. All donations will go to assist residents of San Mateo County, non-profits that assist County residents and small businesses located in San Mateo County.

4. Did San Mateo County contribute to the SMC Strong Fund?

Yes. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors approved a \$3 million contribution of Measure K funds to the SMC Strong fund on March 24, 2020.

5. How is the fund managed?

The San Mateo County Strong fund is managed by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. The Foundation is charging a 1% management fee, a reduced rate from their usual 5% management fee.

6. Are contributions to the fund tax-deductible?

All contributions to the fund are treated as gifts to a public charity and are generally tax deductible, subject to individual limitations. We recommend consulting a tax professional if you have questions about the deductibility of your gift to the fund.

7. Who will decide how the funds are distributed?

The Board of Supervisors will approve a distribution plan for each recipient group, individuals and families, non-profits and small businesses adversely affected by COVID-19.

8. How can donors be sure their contributions are going to help people in need, non-profits or small businesses adversely affected by COVID?

As noted above, the County Board of Supervisors is approving distribution plans for all contributions to SMC Strong. For example, plans will require non-profit grantees to report on how awards are spent including number of people assisted and how grant funds are being applied to operating expenses. That information will be reported back to the Board on a monthly basis. See details on assistance for individuals and families below which includes documentation requirements for income and need along with payments for expenses to vendors, not cash payments to applicants. The details on the small business distribution program are still being developed, but the same type of fraud prevention measures will be included in that program too.

Assistance for Individuals and Families Affected by COVID

1. How will funds be distributed to individuals and families?

The funds to assist individuals and families adversely affected by COVID-19 will be distributed, based on eligibility and funding availability, through the Emergency Financial Assistance program managed by Samaritan House in coordination with the eight Core Service Agencies located throughout the county. San Mateo County residents interested in accessing services, including applying for emergency financial assistance, can contact their local Core Service Agency. Contact information for the Core Service Agencies is found at:

<https://hsa.smcgov.org/emergency-safety-net-assistance-core-service-agencies>

2. What kind of assistance is provided?

COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance can be used to pay for the following emergency needs:

- Housing assistance such as deposits, rent or mortgage payments
- Utility arrears or deposits
- Transportation assistance such as car repairs, vehicle registration or other transportation needs
- Other essential needs, such as medical expenses, as determined on a case by case basis

3. What are the eligibility requirements for the COVID emergency financial assistance program?

To be eligible for COVID-19 emergency financial assistance, an individual or household must meet all the following criteria and provide the requested documentation about their household's financial and housing situation in order to be considered for the available funding:

- Be a San Mateo County resident; and
- Demonstrate through paystubs, bank accounts and/or other documents a household income within the past 30 days at or below the income eligibility threshold, which is currently 60% of the Area Median Income. (Note: the specific income threshold may be shifted, as the COVID-19 situation/response evolves.); and

Size of Household (# of people)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Income Limit	\$67,740	\$77,400	\$87,060	\$96,720	\$104,460	\$112,200	\$119,940	\$127,680

- Demonstrate financial hardship resulting from COVID-19 such as proof of lost or reduction in income; and
- Demonstrate financial need such as a letter for past due rent from a landlord, past due utility or medical bills, emergency car repair or vehicle registration which if not addressed would create hardship for the household; and
- Ability to maintain housing or have a plan in place to maintain housing which will be determined on a case by case basis.

4. Are there eligibility requirements related to citizenship or documentation status?

No. All residents who meet the eligibility requirements, regardless of citizenship or documentation status may apply for COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance.

5. Where do I go to apply for COVID Emergency Financial Assistance?

Call or visit your nearest Core Service Agency (contacting by phone is preferred at this time due to social distancing). See the list at the link below to locate the Core Service Agency that serves your area of the County.

<https://hsa.smcgov.org/emergency-safety-net-assistance-core-service-agencies>

6. What happens if I request financial assistance through the COVID Emergency Financial Assistance program?

When you contact your local Core Service Agency, the staff there will ask for information about your household and your current situation (including income, financial resources, and housing). If it seems that your household may be eligible, the Core Service Agency staff will provide you with information on the application process, which includes providing various verification documents (related to income and financial resources, employment, housing situation, etc.). Once all requested information and documents are submitted, the Core Service Agency and Samaritan House staff will review and may ask for additional information or documentation. The Core Service Agency staff will communicate to you regarding the result of your application and whether assistance will be able to be provided, based on the eligibility criteria and the available funding, as funding is limited.

7. How much money is available through the COVID Emergency Financial Assistance Program?

The Board of Supervisors directed \$1 million of their contribution to SMC Strong to the COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Program. If additional donations are received from private donors, charitable foundations or other sources, that amount will increase.

8. How much does each applicant receive from the COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Fund?

For applicants who are eligible, whether or not they receive assistance and if they do, what amount of assistance they receive, is dependent on factors such as their household's income, resources, and need and on the availability of funding, as funding is limited.

9. For clients who are eligible and determined that they will receive assistance, will they receive the assistance as cash?

No. The Emergency Financial Assistance Program will direct payments on behalf of approved applicants. For example, an approved partial rent payment would be made directly to the property owner or payment for emergency and necessary car repairs would be made directly to the repair shop.

10. What if I need help with other needs such as groceries or help applying for unemployment?

For questions about food resources and how to access meal and grocery assistance programs, contact Second Harvest of Silicon Valley's Food Connection line at 800-984-3663.

You can find out more about unemployment insurance and can apply online at <https://www.edd.ca.gov/unemployment/>

You can also contact the Core Service Agency that serves your area as they provide a variety of services including food resources, assistance with applying for resources like CalFresh and others, and referrals for homeless services. If you need assistance that the Core Service Agency can't provide directly, they will make every effort to connect you to local agencies and organizations that can meet your needs. A link to the Core Services Agencies is below.

<https://hsa.smcgov.org/emergency-safety-net-assistance-core-service-agencies>

Operational Assistance for Non-profit Organizations

1. Why is the SMC Strong Fund providing operational assistance to non-profit organizations?

Since the county's shelter in place order was issued on March 16, 2020, all types of non-profit organizations throughout San Mateo County have seen a reduction in volunteers who make up a significant percentage of their workforce, an increased need for technology such as laptops and VPN access along with cleaning and sanitization supplies to protect the health of both clients and staff and also a loss in revenue due to cancelled fundraising events. All non-profits in the county are being affected by COVID-19. The impacts range from shutting down operations to addressing the needs of more, potentially many more eligible residents.

2. Has the County prioritized how assistance for non-profits will be distributed?

Yes, from the County's \$3 million contribution to the SMC Strong Fund, the Board of Supervisors prioritized \$1 million to the Core Service Agencies to operate, oversee and report on the COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Program. For this first round of funding, the Board is also directing additional funds to the agencies that provide shelter for our homeless residents.

3. Will there be additional rounds of funding for non-profits organizations?

Additional funding for non-profit agencies will depend on the contributions to the SMC Strong Fund. Staff are preparing a recommended distribution plan based on surveys of non-profits with a focus on agencies that provide support our most vulnerable residents, those with very low incomes, the elderly, people who have disabilities, and people who are experiencing homelessness.

4. Can a non-profit organization apply now for future rounds of funding?

No. The Board of Supervisors will determine priorities for any future rounds of funding at their April 7, 2020 meeting. Priority will be given to agencies that provide direct services for the most vulnerable residents, agencies that have established funding and reporting relationships with the County and agencies that can leverage County funds with commitments from other funders.

Assistance for Small Businesses

1. How will SMC Strong funds be distributed to small businesses?

The San Mateo County Economic Development Association (SAMCEDA) has been designated by the County as the lead for business resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, and is developing a recommended distribution process for the small business assistance program. To develop that process, SAMCEDA is working closely with chambers of commerce, convention and visitor's bureaus, non-profits, and other stakeholders throughout the County to survey local small businesses and employers about how COVID-19 is impacting their operations and what support they need most in the short term - (take the survey here). A recommended process for distributions under the small business assistance program will be presented to the Board of Supervisors at their meeting on April 7, 2020.

2. Can a small business pre-apply or get on a waiting list now?

No. The application process will be opened after the plan for distributions under the small business assistance plan is approved by the Board of Supervisors. Interested business should complete the SAMCEDA survey and follow the SAMCEDA website at <https://www.samceda.org/COVID-19-Resource-Links-Business> for updates on the plan and links to COVID-19 related business resources.

3. How can I and/or my employees get help applying for unemployment?

Employees can find out more information about unemployment insurance and how to apply online at <https://www.edd.ca.gov/unemployment/>

4. How can I learn more about the Federal Stimulus bill or other State and Federal programs for small businesses?

FEDERAL LINKS:

- [Paycheck Protection Program FAQs for Small Business](#)
- [Small Business Administration \(SBA\): Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Small Business Guidance & Loan Resources](#)
- [Small Business Administration \(SBA\): COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan Application](#)
- [Center for Economic and Policy Research \(CEPR\): Federal Stimulus FAQ](#)

STATE LINKS:

- [Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development \(GO-Biz\): Coronavirus 2019](#)
- [America's SBDC California: COVID-19 – The Latest News & Resources for Your Business](#)
- [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act \(Cal OES\)](#)

SAN MATEO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (SAMCEDA):

- [Business Resources](#)
- [Financial Relief](#)
- [Find Your Local Chambers](#)
- [Take Our Small Business Survey](#)