



## Responding To COVID-19

*What's (not) Happening and How Funders Can Support the Field*

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GFE Covid-19 Webinar

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Bellwether is a national nonprofit focused on dramatically changing education and life outcomes for underserved children. We do this by **helping organizations accelerate impact and improving public policy and practice** for the education field.

**\‘BEL-,weth-ər\, noun;**  
A leader of a movement or activity;  
also, a leading indicator of future trends.



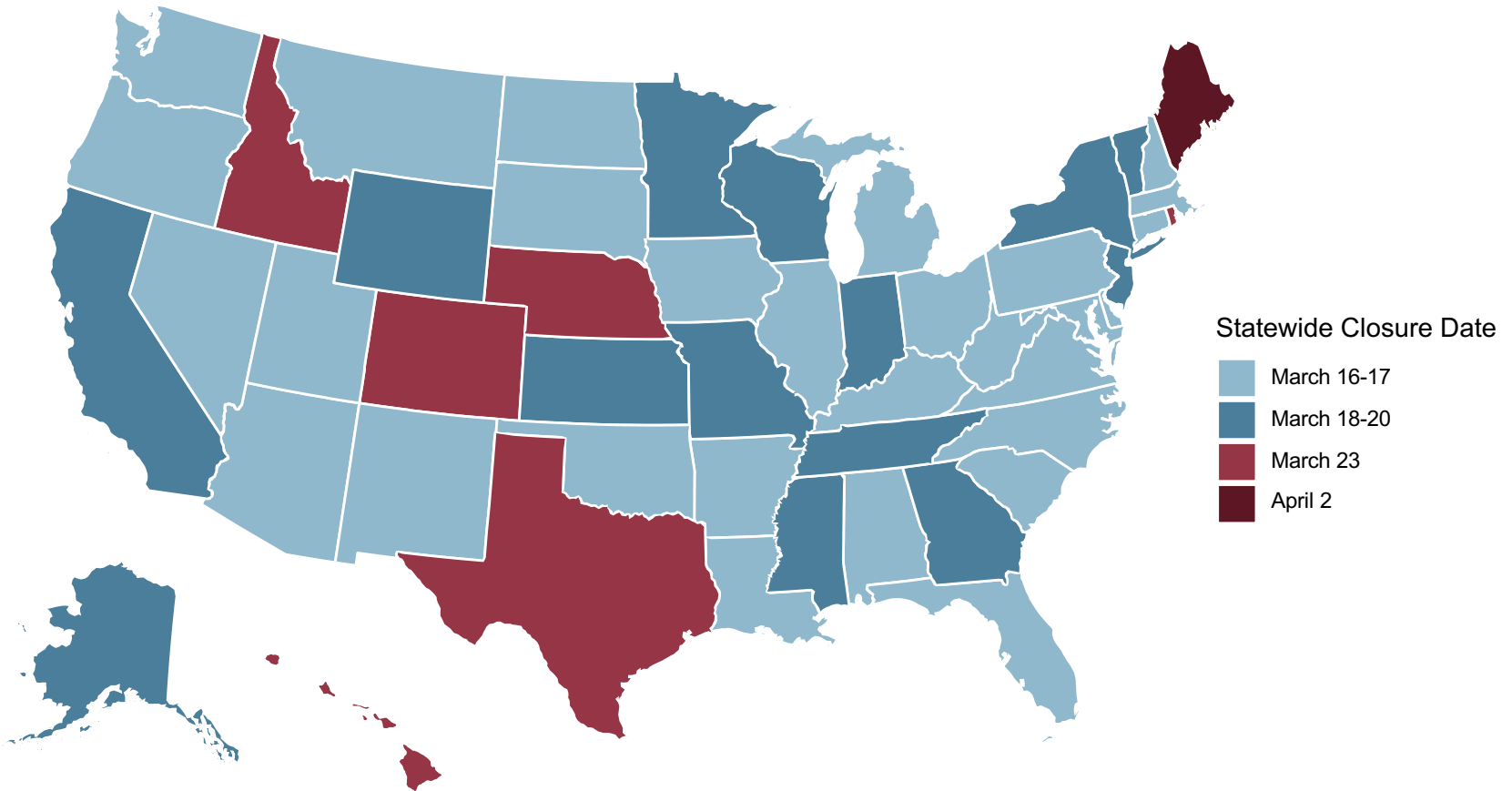
## Topics for Discussion

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- Direct impacts to schools and students now
- How districts and schools are responding
- Key challenges to instructional delivery
- Impact to early childhood supports
- Actions by the U.S. Department of Education and Congress to date
- Longer term fiscal impact for states and schools
- Other longer term considerations for schools

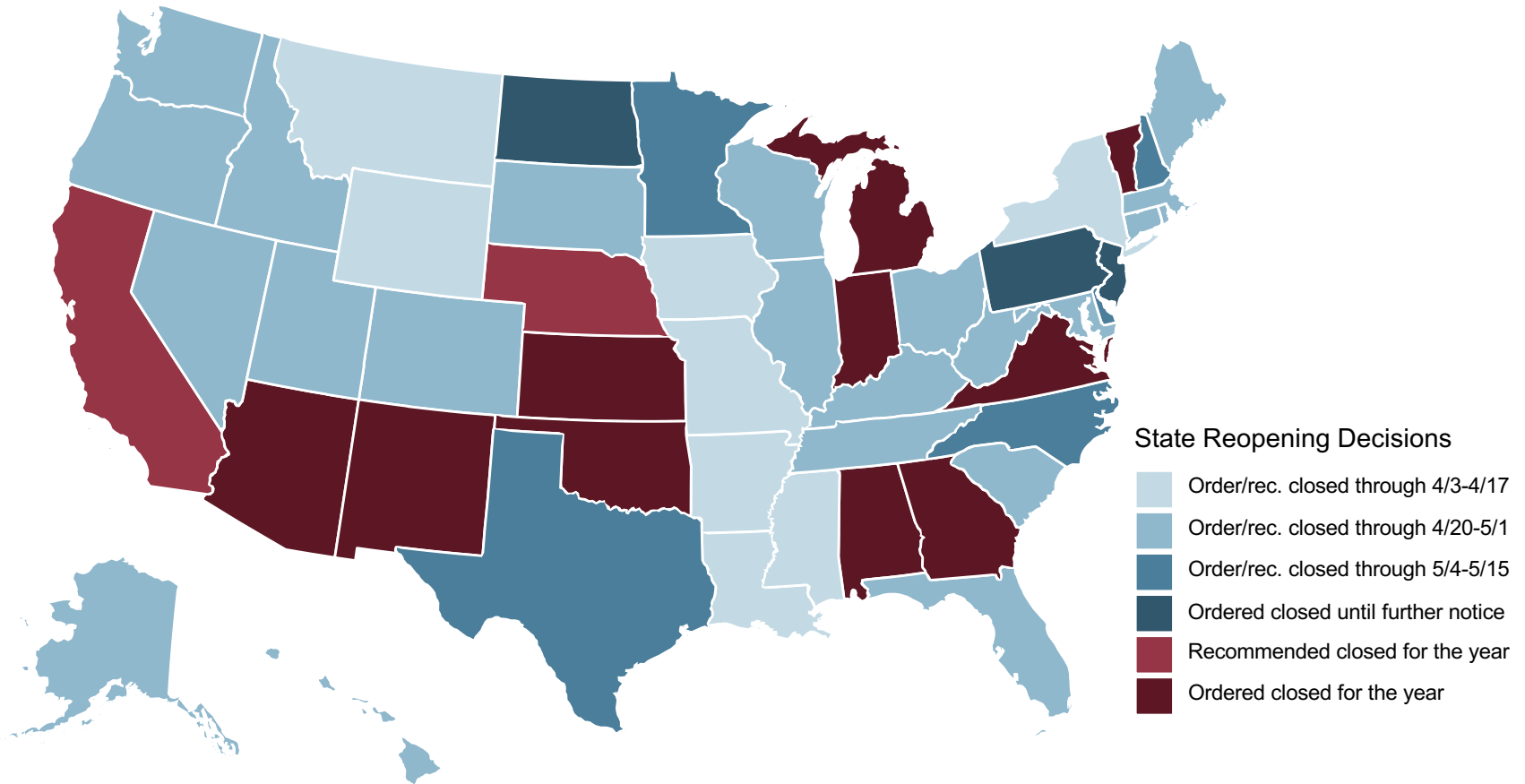
# As part of states' containment strategy, every school in the country is closed for an extended period of time

Thirty-four states shut down schools by Tuesday, March 17;  
forty-four were shut down by Friday, March 20



# Twelve states so far have ordered or recommended that schools remain closed for the rest of this school year

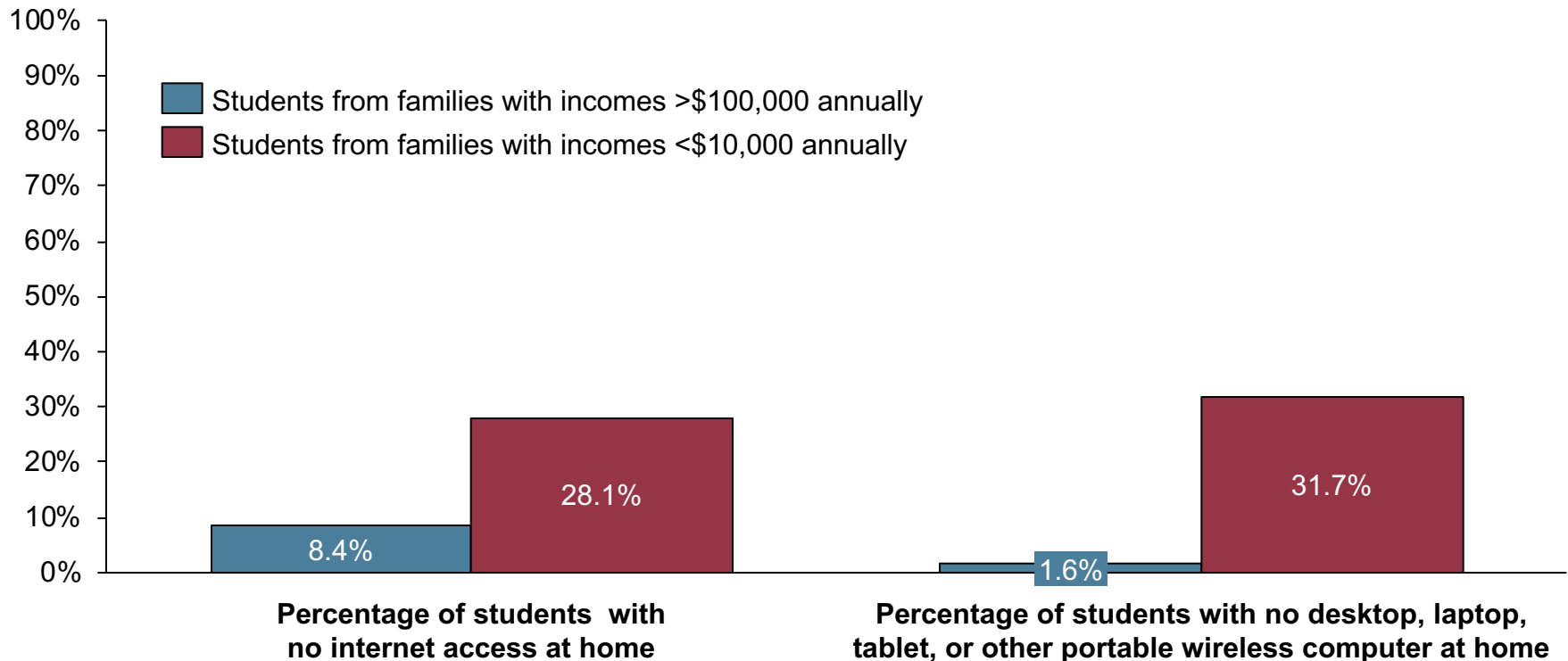
The number of states closed for the remainder of 2019-20 is expected to grow, and impacts on school openings next fall are possible



# Schools are working to provide virtual instruction while buildings are closed, but there is variation in student access

Students from **lower-income families** are less likely to have access to **internet** or a **non-smartphone, internet-ready device** than their **higher-income peers**

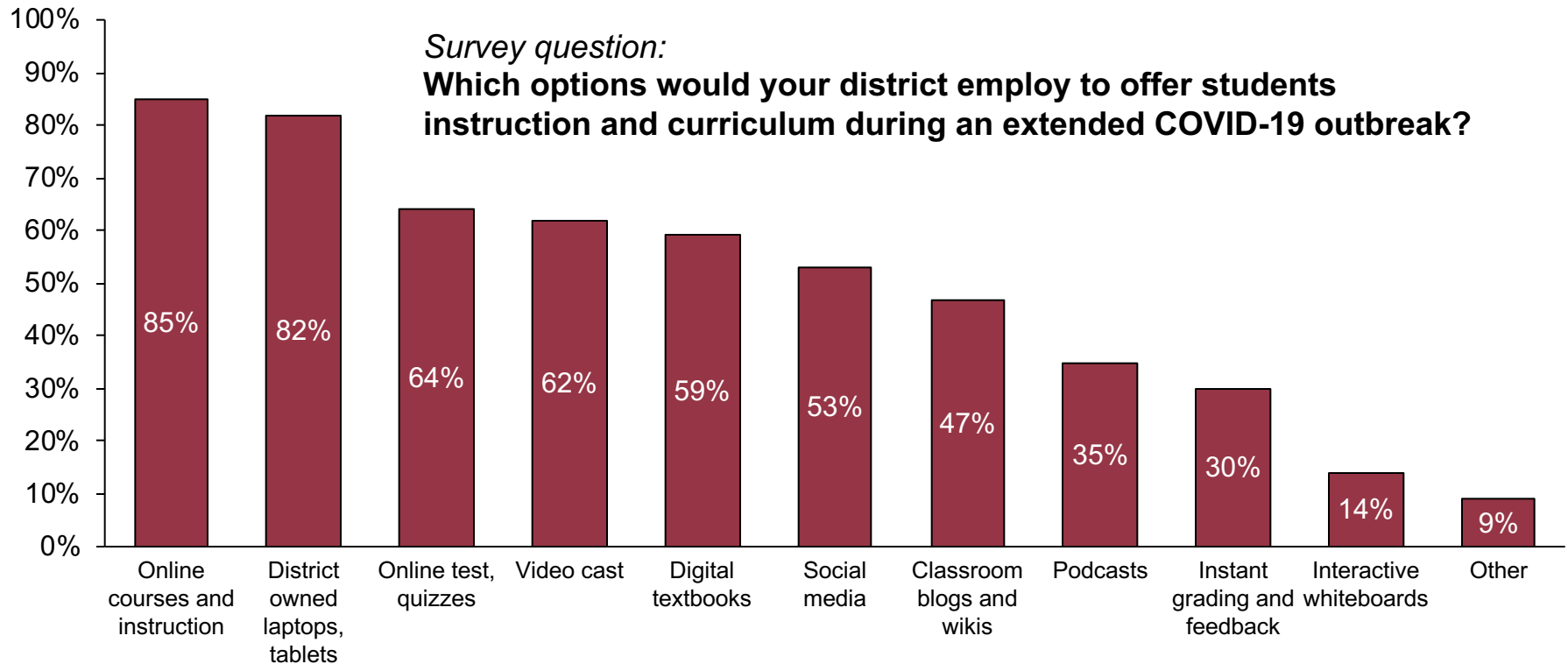
*Percentage of children ages 3-18, by type of connectivity issue and family income, 2017*



# Connectivity issues will pose a problem as districts increasingly deliver instruction virtually

The School Superintendents Association conducted a survey of 1600 **superintendents** from across the country and found that the **majority of districts** intend to offer instruction through a **medium that requires internet access**

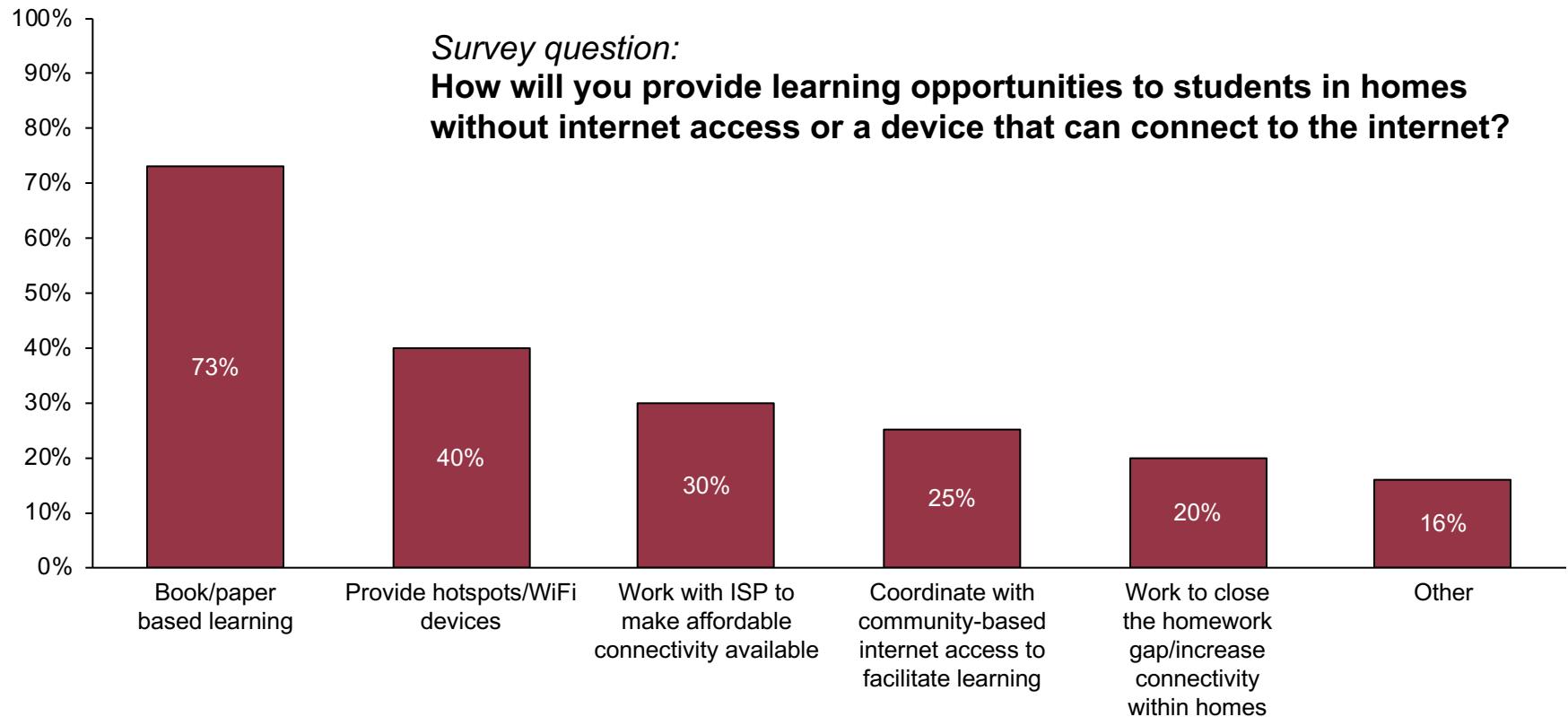
Percentage of districts, by instructional delivery medium, 2020



# If delivering instruction virtually is not possible, districts have few options for alternative modes of instruction

Districts plan to **address connectivity issues directly**, but will have to resort to **book/paper-based learning** if those efforts are not successful

*Percentage of districts, by type of solution to connectivity issues, 2020*





# Even with this progress, however, districts continue to face challenges reaching all students

As districts quickly shift to online learning, some are struggling to **locate** and **maintain communication** with their students, preventing them from providing **instruction** or **support**

This challenge is particularly relevant for districts serving **more vulnerable populations**

English-language learners	Homeless students	Students in rural districts
<p>Districts must quickly translate materials and content into multiple languages, either in-house or by hiring a contractor.</p> <p><i>Example district:</i> Seattle Public Schools is translating materials into six languages, but those translations cover only a fraction of the 160 languages their 7,000 English-language learners speak.</p>	<p>Homeless students lack a stable physical environment and may experience health risks, such as being unable to follow social distancing.</p> <p><i>Example district:</i> Kent Intermediate School District in Grand Rapids, Michigan partnered with a nonprofit to deliver meals to children in homeless shelters and motels far from food pickup site.</p>	<p>Rural districts struggle to serve students with less access to the infrastructure necessary for online education and distance learning.</p> <p><i>Example district:</i> About 20% of students in Minford Local Schools — a small rural district in southern Ohio — lack internet or technology access.</p>

# At the federal level, the Department of Education (ED) has made decisions to support schools and districts

**ED's decisions over the past several weeks have been designed to ease the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic**

<b>K-12</b>	<b>Higher Education</b>
<p>States can apply for a waiver from annual standardized <b>student assessments</b> requirements</p>	<p>Federal <b>student loan</b> borrowers are automatically placed in forbearance; interest is temporarily set at 0%</p>
<p>ED released guidance explicitly saying that compliance with federal law protecting <b>students with disabilities</b> should not prevent schools from offering distance education</p>	<p>Proposed rules to encourage distance learning by reducing barriers to <b>competency-based education</b> and providing flexibility for measuring <b>credit hours</b></p>

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture has also waived rules governing free and reduced-price meal pick-up to reduce barriers for school districts to distribute meals to students and families*

# The CARES Act codifies regulatory flexibility focused specifically on schools and students

## K-12

- National Emergency Education Waivers giving the Secretary of Education authority to **waive requirements for states related to assessments, accountability, and related reporting in ESSA**
- Protections for **recipients of TEACH grants**

## Higher Education

### Student Supports

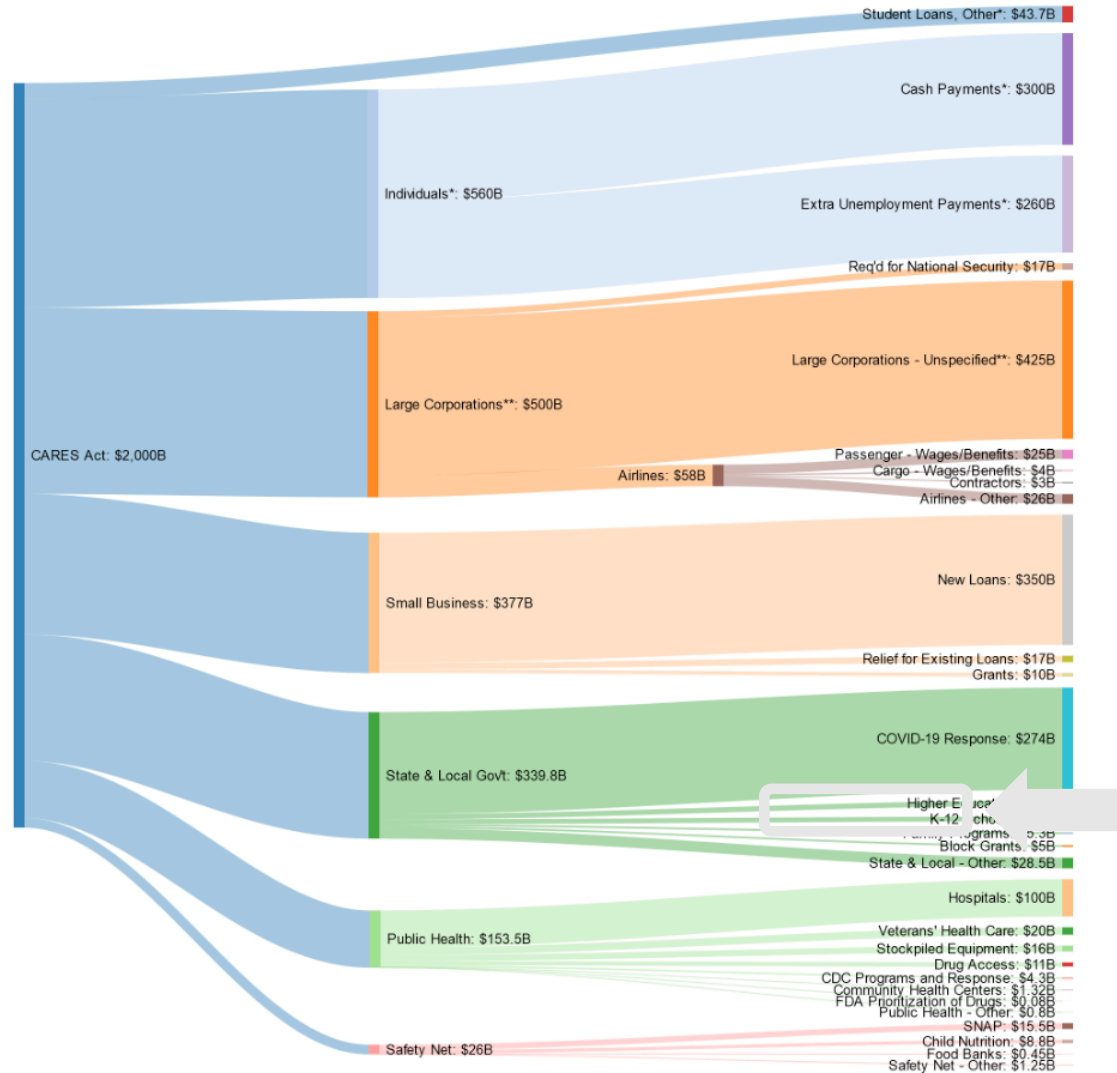
- Six-month **moratorium on all federal Direct Loans** and no interest accrual.
- Allows colleges to transfer federal work study funds to **supplemental educational opportunity grant** program for students
- Allows colleges to **pay federal work study dollars to students** even if they are not able to work
- **Waives requirement to return Pell grant** dollars for students who drop out as a result of COVID-19

### Institutional Supports

- **Waives institution matching requirement** for campus-based aid programs.
- **Payment deferral** on HBCU Capital Financing Loans.

# The CARES Act allocates \$2 trillion, but only a small fraction is dedicated to education

- Approximately \$340 billion in funding from the CARES Act will support state and local governments, which includes K-12 and postsecondary education systems
- While the CARES Act is an emergency measure intended to address immediate needs, future federal action may be necessary to supplement future state and local government revenue shortfalls

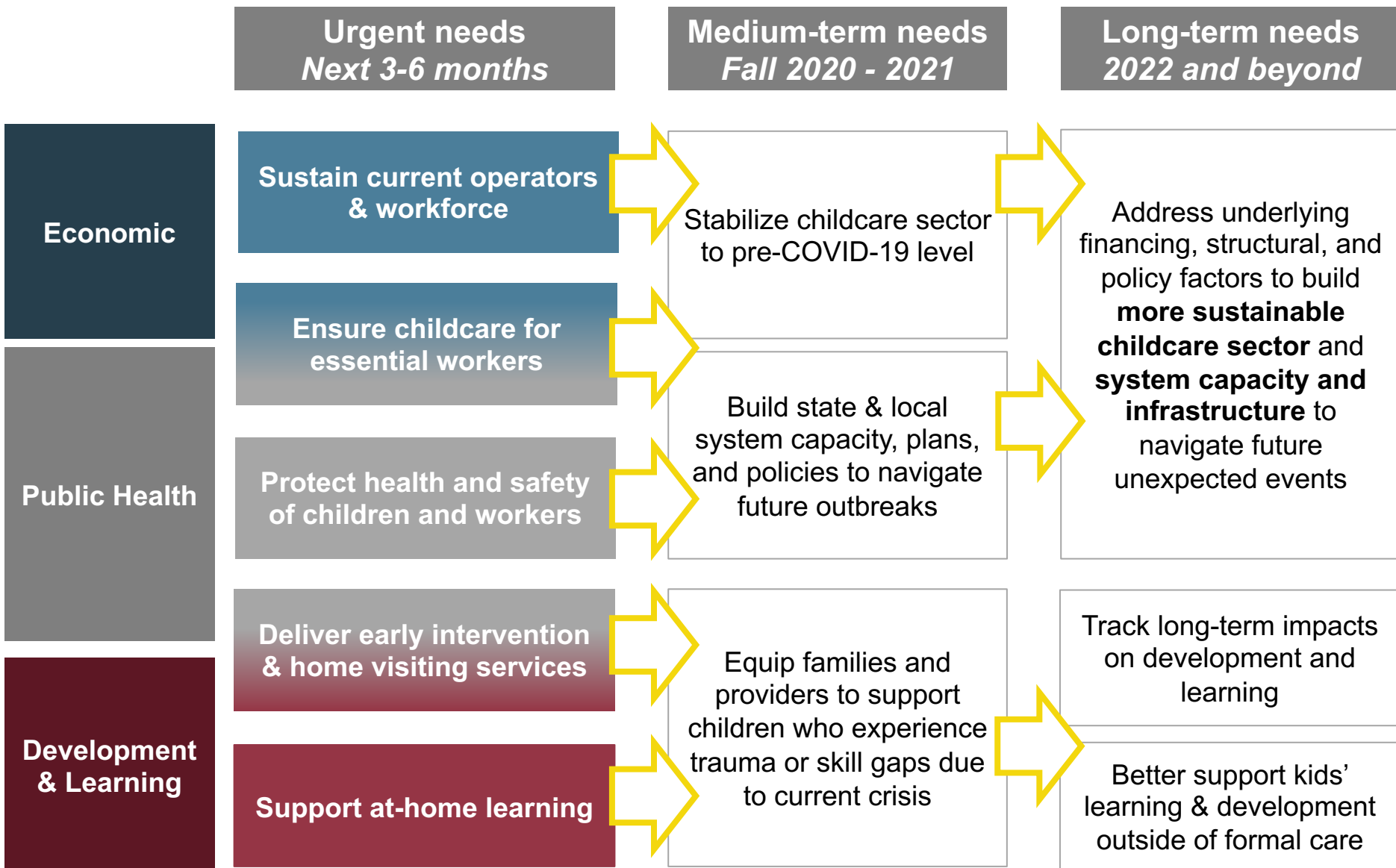


# The CARES Act includes flexible funding focused specifically on schools and students

**CARES Act funding distributed to state and local education agencies can be used for a wide range of purposes, maximizing flexibility and centering decisions at the state and local levels**

<b>Education Stabilization Fund: \$30.75B</b>	<b>Other funding for schools and students</b>
\$13.2 billion for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, delivered as <b>sub-grants to LEAs</b>	<b>Nutritional supports:</b> \$15.8 billion for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and \$8.8 billion for Child Nutrition Programs
\$14 billion for <b>higher education</b>	\$100 million in Project SERV grants to help <b>clean and disinfect schools</b>
\$3 Billion for <b>Governor's Education Relief Fund</b>	\$69 millions for schools funded by the <b>Bureau of Indian Education</b>

# In addition to K-12, COVID-19 is creating new early childhood sector needs, and exacerbating others



# CARES Act provides funding support for early care and education programs....

Program	Funding	Description/Use
Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG)	\$3.5 billion to states, tribes, & territories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide payments and <b>assistance to child care providers</b></li><li>• Authorizes use of CCDBG funds to provide <b>child care to essential workers</b>, without regard to income</li><li>• Providers can access funds for cleaning and sanitation even if they did not previously receive CCDBG funds</li><li>• States, Territories, Tribes encouraged to place conditions on payments to ensure continued <b>payment of child care workers</b></li></ul>
Head Start	\$750 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>\$500 million for supplemental summer programs</b>; funds awarded through non-competitive grants to most ready Head Start grantees</li><li>• Remainder to Head Start grantees based on current allocations</li></ul>

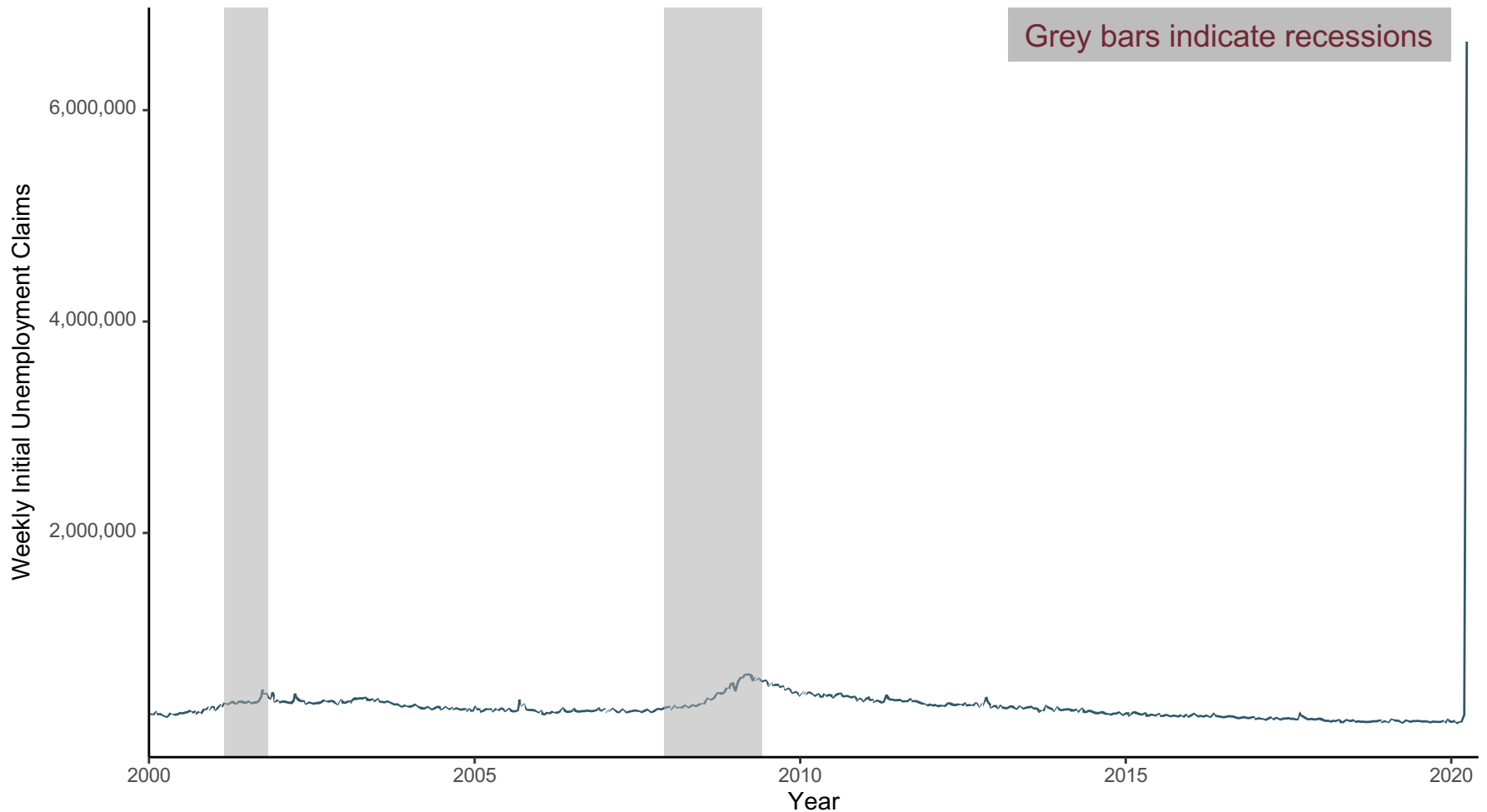
## And several other funding streams can be used by recipients to support early care and education needs

Program	Funding	Description/Use
TANF	--	Extends TANF through November 30, 2020
Governor's Stabilization Fund	\$3 billion	Can be used to support LEAs, IHEs, and any institution in state that governor deems essential for carrying out emergency educational services, including early education and child care
Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund	\$13.5 billion	LEAs may use funds for early childhood activities authorized under ESEA and IDEA
Community Development Fund	\$5 billion	Community Development Fund funds may be used for educational purposes, including early childhood
Child Nutrition Programs	\$8.8 billion	Can support early childhood programs and schools continuing to provide meals to children

**In addition to funds directly supporting young children and their families, new supports for small businesses are particularly beneficial to early childhood providers**



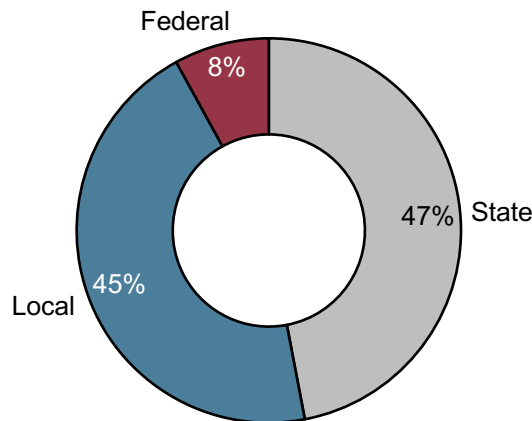
# The economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic will be unlike any other economic downturn in recent memory



Source: FRED

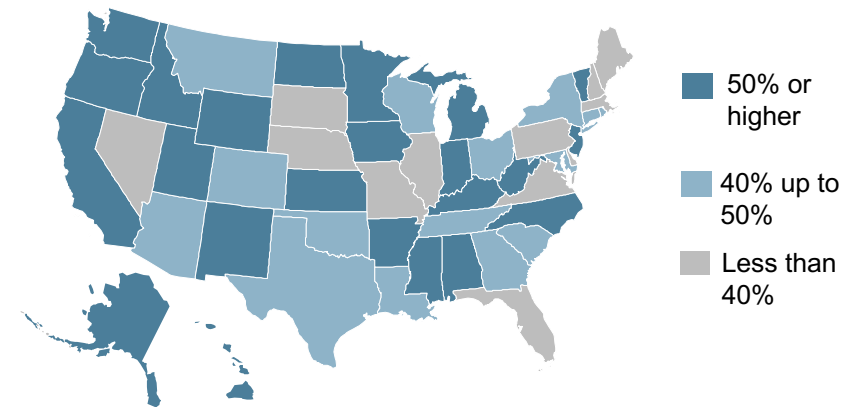
# Federal stimulus helps immediately, but schools are likely to experience significant medium- to long-term fallout from declining state revenues

State and local tax revenues provide the vast majority of funding for public schools



National average public school revenues by source, 2016-17

The relative share of state versus local revenues varies widely by state



State share of public education revenues, 2015-16

- State revenues rely heavily on sales taxes (48% of total revenues) and income taxes (42% of total revenues), both of which are volatile in an economic downturn
- Unlike the federal government, states cannot spend more than they take in, so reduced revenues must translate to cuts in spending
- Local revenues rely mostly on property taxes, which are more stable in a downturn, but local revenues are not distributed equitably across districts; often districts with the most need have the least access to these funds

# COVID-19 will have long-term effects that schools and districts must grapple with

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- Immediate: How will extended school closures affect decisions about **high school graduation** and **grade promotion**? What effect will extended school closures have on **teacher** and **leader evaluation systems**?
- Mid-term: To what extent will states and districts implement **catch-up strategies** (like **summer school** and/or **intensive tutoring**)? How will canceling state assessments affect **accountability determinations** for school districts and charter schools?
- Long-term: How should leaders manage rolling "cluster" closures in the 2020-21 school year? To what extent will extended school closures and an **economic downturn** have **negative downstream effects** for students beyond this year, particularly those from historically underserved communities? To what extent will the sudden spike in **online education** lead to sustained increases or decreases in online education going forward? What would even 1% of parents changing their schooling preference look like?

# How funders can support organizations during COVID-19

- **Support the front lines and supply lines:** Districts and charter schools are making policy quickly, and the decisions they make now will dictate their response for the remainder of the crisis. Schools and organizations supporting schools need immediate support and flexibility to tackle these challenges. *Currently there is more demand than support.*
- **Spot good practice to scale capacity:** Toolkits, resource websites, convenings (virtual), and cohort support work are high-impact investments that will expand capacity and improve response and outcomes across the field. *Making resources “free” to the field is more efficient and impactful right now*
- **Move quickly, communicate often:** Nonprofits and grantees are dealing with a deeply uncertain outlook. Funds, clarity of intentions and expectations, and easing of bureaucracy help cut down on uncertainty.
- **Use your perspective to encourage collaboration:** Work to ensure grantees aren't duplicating efforts. Too many organizations are spending days replicating work that already exists. Help them avoid redundancy by breaking down silos and focusing on grantees' unique value add.
- **Look at the long game:** Consider downstream effects as we head into a recession, and consider how you can maintain your impact through your investments and support to partners, including potential mergers between partners, or new high-quality strategic plans for grantees to help plan ahead.