To: Honorable Mayor Sylvester Turner and County Judge Ed Emmett
From: Anthony Chase and William Jackson, Co-Chairs, Advisory Board
       Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund
Date: August 24, 2018
Subject: Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund Evaluation & Lessons Learned

Nearly one year ago, Hurricane Harvey hit the shores of the Texas Gulf Coast, bringing widespread devastation to the region. The spotlight was put on the greater Houston region and people eagerly watched to view how we would respond. In addition to the heroic acts and generosity displayed in the immediate aftermath, your offices worked together to establish the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund (HHRF), which is now the largest of many philanthropic efforts across Houston and Texas that support those impacted by the disaster.

More than 127,000 donors responded to the call to help local citizens recover by donating over $114 million. The Advisory Board determined that these funds should be used to fill the gaps and address the immediate needs of those impacted by Harvey while federal assistance dollars were yet to be dispensed. Working hand in hand with the HHRF grants committee, a group of knowledgeable and engaged community philanthropic professionals, we were able to consult with federal and local government experts to learn about the recovery process and projections for Houston and Harris County. These insights, combined with a commissioned needs assessment conducted by the Rice University Kinder Institute for Urban Research, and conversations with other local funders, allowed us to select grant focus areas that would benefit the most vulnerable populations, including the elderly, low-income, individuals with disabilities, and the undocumented.

To date, we have distributed more than $110.5 million to 123 nonprofit organizations. Our grants have allowed organizations to provide home repair, disaster case management, emergency financial assistance, behavioral health services, legal services to resolve housing, employment, and other consumer related issues, homelessness prevention, furniture and furnishings, transportation, and educational support services. Grantees have not only received financial support, but have been engaged throughout their funding cycle to increase awareness of each other’s recovery efforts and foster collaboration to further leverage funding. We encouraged grantees to utilize existing systems that could strengthen their work and reduce duplication of efforts, from participating in the Harris County Long Term Recovery Committee to using universal disaster case management tools.

We understood that, though the need was great, vulnerable populations do not always have easy access to, or knowledge about, services. So, in addition to granting to traditional nonprofit service providers with deep community relationships, we sought creative ways of getting services to those in need, through innovative partnerships with our school districts, large hospital systems, and grassroots organizations.
Additionally, as we heard the challenges that residents faced in receiving services, we narrowed in on the home repair process, and supported our more than $38 million investment in home repair services by launching Harvey Home Connect (www.harveyhomeconnect.org). Harvey Home Connect is a universal application and coordination tool designed to improve the experience of homeowners seeking home repair services from nonprofits. In its first two months, it has exceeded its goals in matching homeowners to agencies for repairs.

We acknowledge the efforts and accomplishments listed above would not have been possible without the expertise and leadership exhibited by the Greater Houston Community Foundation, who served as the administrator of the fund. From the very beginning, their staff worked expeditiously to establish the fund, accept and acknowledge donations, and ensure that the dollars were distributed strategically, efficiently, and effectively. Their ability to convene stakeholders, solicit feedback, and develop recommendations while handling all administration needs has been second to none.

As the next hurricane season approached and we neared the end of the grants process for the fund, we and GHCF agreed to participate in a third-party evaluation of our efforts to identify lessons learned and opportunities for improvement in the event of a future disaster. We commissioned nonprofit consulting firm FSG to conduct the study, and we are excited to share their findings with you. The attached memo contains their recommendations, which address establishing and coordinating a standing joint disaster relief fund, while also sharing broader considerations for the regional and philanthropic response to disaster recovery.

Also attached, you will find an impact report for the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund. The report, derived from data provided by individual grantee reports (as required by their grant agreements), covers the four funding rounds. Our grantees have reported serving 150,000 households to date, of which 74% of funds went to individuals that met our vulnerable population’s criteria. We expect them to serve over 40,000 additional households over the course of the next one to two years.

As we close, we want to express our appreciation again to you and the thousands of donors who entrusted the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund to identify the strategy and organizations that would best serve those who desperately needed assistance. To maintain their trust, our aim was to be transparent about the fund operations and distributions.

On behalf of the Advisory Board of the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund, we thank you for your trust in our abilities to lead one of the largest disaster recovery funding efforts in our region and in the United States. We know that the thousands of Houston and Harris County residents continue to face hardship from this unprecedented disaster. In addition to serving in honor of you, we served in honor of them, our fellow Houstonians, and look forward to the continued work of our nonprofits on the ground to serve our most vulnerable neighbors. It has been our pleasure to work with such a dedicated and knowledgeable group of professionals who continue to work tirelessly to help others recover.

Humbly Submitted,

Anthony Chase and William Jackson, Co-Chairs, Advisory Board
Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund
Learning from the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund: Considerations for the Future | August 2018

Introduction
On August 25, 2017, Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf Coast, Houston, and its surrounding areas. The Category 4 storm created a 1-in-1,000 year flood event and caused over $125 billion in damage, which was more than any other natural disaster in the U.S. except Hurricane Katrina.

In the first, critical days of the storm, City of Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Harris County Judge Ed Emmett established the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund (HHRF) to provide immediate, medium, and long-term relief to the City of Houston and Harris County. One of the goals of the Fund was to provide bridge funding before the arrival of state and federal government support.

An unprecedented partnership between local governments, the Fund represented the willingness of multiple parties to unite around the common effort of disaster relief and recovery, serving as a new model of collaboration. The Fund is advised by an Advisory Board—equally comprised of and chaired by representatives from the City and County—and a Grants Committee of local funders, and is administered by the Greater Houston Community Foundation (GHCF).

GHCF engaged FSG, a social impact strategy and evaluation consulting firm, to gather insights and lessons learned about HHRF’s operations to-date as well as best practices in the disaster relief field. Findings from this study will inform planning for and response to present and future disaster relief situations in the region. It is important to note that this study was not an impact assessment; that process is currently underway and is forthcoming separately from GHCF. Information on the impact of the first two rounds of HHRF grantmaking is available in the accompanying HHRF Impact Summary Report.

The study was guided by the question “What is the Fund’s vision for a well-prepared, local, philanthropic response to disasters in the region?” and focused on 7 key areas:

- Grantmaking processes
- Data
- Communications
- Nonprofit capacity
- Partnerships and thought leadership
- Governance and structure
- Administrative capacity

To inform this work, we [FSG] collected information from 149 stakeholders—including Advisory Board members, Grants Committee members, grantees, advisors, City of Houston recovery team, Harris County recovery team, and GHCF staff—as well as other disaster relief funders and resources. Data were collected from surveys, interviews, focus groups, and secondary research.

Learning from Other Disaster Relief Funders
Philanthropy is uniquely positioned to quickly provide resources in immediate relief and recovery stages of disaster relief, buying time for government support and the development of long-term recovery and preparedness strategies. In particular, private philanthropy has three key assets to leverage in disaster situations: the ability to quickly provide funding with fewer restrictions than a typical grant process, to bring together and build relationships among funders and cross-sector stakeholders, and to leverage experience working in different sectors and on a wide variety of social issues. It is common practice for private and community foundations to be at the center of disaster relief efforts, whether as the sole administrator and leader of a

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1 “Harvey is a 1,000-year flood event unprecedented in scale.” Jason Samenow, The Washington Post, 2017.

fund or as the backbone organization in a partnership effort, similar to GHCF’s role in the HHRF. 3,4

HHRF is unique in comparison to other disaster relief funds such as the Hurricane Katrina New Orleans Recovery Fund and the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Recovery Fund. The Fund is larger than typical relief efforts (by more than 2x dollars raised), involved multiple, distinct rounds of funding, and was established as a joint partnership between government and private philanthropy (not to mention the City-County partnership)—whereas most relief funds are governed and operated by a single entity, often a community foundation.

Considerations for Future Disaster Relief Funds

The study uncovered a number of strengths (what worked well this time and should be maintained or repeated in future disasters), challenges (what can be improved upon or was missing from the HHRF effort), and forward-looking opportunities (what structures and practices can be considered for future disaster relief efforts). Looking across these findings, the following set of lessons learned emerged as considerations for similar disaster relief funds in the future.

1. **Maintain a standing structure(s) (e.g., Advisory Board, Grants Committee) that can quickly activate, empower, and implement increased resources during disaster times.** A continued, organized philanthropic response to disasters should engage key government, philanthropy, academic (e.g., Kinder Institute, Rice University), nonprofit, and private sector leaders. This structure should meet regularly (e.g., quarterly) and will establish action steps, mechanisms, and a roadmap to support the quick activation of resources during disaster times.

2. **Leverage and support GHCF’s expertise and capacity as the Fund’s administrator and/or a central backbone organization to coordinate efforts.** Given widespread agreement of the effectiveness of GHCF as the administrator of the Fund, GHCF should play a similar role in future efforts. Through this process, GHCF staff gained greater knowledge of the regional nonprofit sector and disaster relief, which can be leveraged to maintain and increase efficiency in future efforts.

3. **Engage regional stakeholders in a discussion on how to build on the strengths and learnings from the Fund to better serve regional efforts in future disasters.** Efforts to prepare for future disaster relief situations can consider expanding to a focus on regional preparedness that can then activate specific resources and organizations based on the geographic needs of the specific disaster.

4. **Establish a disaster administration fund to increase “startup” expediency when a disaster strikes.** Doing any of the activities in the other “Considerations for Future Disaster Relief Funds” requires both human and financial resources. Maintaining funding between disasters is challenging. There may be an opportunity to pool resources across funders to establish a disaster administration fund that can support ongoing efforts. It can also be beneficial to secure pledges from large donors in advance of a disaster that can quickly be released when a disaster occurs.

5. **Build on the data that will come from this grantmaking analysis and conduct an assessment of nonprofits to identify key partners as well as capacity gaps.** A regional landscape assessment of nonprofits will help map a diverse list of organizations that could be mobilized in disaster preparedness, relief, and recovery contexts. This assessment could also serve to identify capacity strengths and needs of individual organizations in serving their communities as well as the broader assets and gaps across the sector. It is important to note that such an assessment would require significant resources and additional funding.

6. **Establish pre-existing agreements with some agencies and grant unrestricted funds to grantees immediately after a disaster strikes.** Building on the increased knowledge of the nonprofit sector from the landscape assessment, create a pre-approval process in which the

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Fund selects some grantees by geography, strengths, and capacity ahead of time in order to expedite the process of deploying funds during a disaster.

7. **Institute a grant funding category to specifically encourage investments in smaller and/or under-resourced organizations, with explicit considerations for diversity and equity in grantmaking.** In addition to supporting proven, pre-selected organizations with unrestricted funds, the Fund can establish different funding categories—e.g., a category with required training(s) and opportunities to collaborate with larger organizations in the delivery of services in order to build the sector, as well as reduce territorialism for grant dollars. These categories would encourage more equitable opportunities for organizations to demonstrate their capacity to leverage funds.

8. **Maintain flexibility and transparency in operations, especially in grantmaking processes.** Given the dynamic nature of disasters, the Fund can remove traditional barriers to funding (e.g., reducing grant requirements, more unrestricted funding). The Fund can also provide more long-term, multi-year funding to support both project-based and capacity-building work. Clear communication of these guidelines and the grantmaking process will encourage transparency and build trust among grantees.

9. **Continue to use data and engage in feedback loops with the community to inform grantmaking and better serve impacted communities.** Ongoing and future efforts should continue to use roundtables, site visits, and convenings to inform grantmaking as well as ongoing efforts for preparedness and capacity building. The Fund can also explore the establishment of “community navigators” who have knowledge of and can provide feedback on unmet community needs, which organizations serve those needs, and grantee services and resources during times of disaster.

10. **Establish data-sharing agreements with public, private, and social sector partners ahead of time.** Implement pre-established data-sharing agreements to facilitate a coordinated disaster response across nonprofits, funders, government, and other stakeholders. These agreements may be leveraged as a foundation towards standardization of data and establishing a universal, centralized database during disasters. In addition, these agreements must manage for and take into consideration the security and privacy concerns of some vulnerable populations (e.g., people who are undocumented).

11. **Continue to support relationship building between nonprofits through ongoing convenings in non-disaster times, and ensure the convenings are accessible.** In the aftermath of the disaster, GHCF played a critical role in building connections and relationships among nonprofits through its convenings. Moving forward, GHCF can continue to play this role in non-disaster times, providing opportunities for organizations and stakeholders to identify sector-wide gaps, organizations’ capacity needs, opportunities for coordination, and new partnerships that will be critical in the event of a disaster.

12. **Communicate clearly and consistently to the public on progress, needs, and challenges to sustain momentum for ongoing disaster relief work.** The Fund can disseminate a plan to inform the public of how it intends to support and amplify disaster preparedness, relief, and recovery efforts. These efforts, along with town hall meetings, fliers and social media campaigns, can create forums to communicate the long-term and continuous nature of disaster relief work to the public, which can help build and maintain momentum and resiliency.

13. **Work with peer funders, government, the nonprofit sector, and other disaster relief and recovery stakeholders to establish clear roles and a deliberate, cross-sector, coordinated response to disasters.** Cross-sector partnerships between the Fund, relief stakeholders such as philanthropy and the Red Cross, and recovery stakeholders such as government and the United Way can coordinate and streamline efforts to more effectively serve the community’s needs. It is critical that a coordinated response maintains flexibility and adaptability. However, there are opportunities to learn from other disaster relief efforts and establish memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between
funders as well as with other sectors (e.g., government). These efforts can serve to set clear guiding principles and mechanisms for coordination (e.g., data sharing, communication), distinct roles and expectations, and a central coordinating function.

**Summary**

It is clear from the data collected and analyzed by this study that the HHRF was successful in the structure and governance model it implemented. The success is compelling given the severity of the disaster, the size of the Fund, and the public-private partnership, and it is worth highlighting the uniqueness and effectiveness of the cross-sector partnerships that were formed and leveraged to serve the community. Furthermore, it is evident that the Fund’s success to-date in responding to Hurricane Harvey was made possible in large part due to the role the Greater Houston Community Foundation played as the Fund’s administrator, facilitator, and leader. The Fund has laid a strong foundation for responding to future disasters. In alignment and collaboration with the broader philanthropic community, it can continue to act on a number of opportunities—outlined above—to bolster the regional infrastructure for disaster preparedness, relief, and recovery. In addition, the Fund can review the considerations above with its key stakeholders and develop a structure and framework for operationalization and implementation.
Aug. 25, 2017
Hurricane Harvey hits

Round 1: 99% of funds spent
Goal: Provide basic needs and immediate relief

Round 2: 98% of funds spent
Goal: Infuse nonprofits and faith-based organizations across the county with funding to meet the immediate needs of their communities

Jan. 2018 - Dec. 2018 Duration: 1 Year, Amount: 32.0 MM
Round 3: 58% of funds spent
Goal: Build disaster case management and financial assistance capacity across the county to serve the most vulnerable populations in the most heavily impacted regions

Apr. 2018 - Mar. 2020 Duration: 1 - 2 Years, Amount: 44.6 MM
Round 4: 15% of funds spent
Goals: Home Repair - build 2000 homes for low-income neighbors, Legal Services - provide access to legal services for any resident affected by the storm, Behavioral Health - prevent negative health impacts on vulnerable populations, especially children

Over half of the total funds have been spent to date, roughly coinciding with the duration of the grant timeline through 2020

Note: We will continue to receive and share reporting from grantees through the duration of the grants (2020)

BENEFICIARIES SERVED TO DATE - BY ROUND:
ACTUAL AND EXPECTED, TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS

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Over a quarter of a million people have been served so far, more than grantees originally reported

Grantees reported serving over 150,000 households per date, with 40,000 additional estimated to be served through 2020
**BENEFICIARIES BY RACE**

- **Hispanic**: 89,979 (51%)
- **Black or African-American**: 62,657 (35%)
- **Other**: 15,312 (9%)
- **Non-Hispanic White**: 9,489 (5%)

*Other represents races that didn’t fall under provided categories, including but not limited to Asian and other ethnicities.*

**BENEFICIARIES BY INCOME**

- **< 100%**: 28,793 (63%)
- **100-200%**: 12,339 (27%)
- **200-400%**: 3,603 (8%)
- **400% +**: 720 (2%)

*Percentages are based on federal poverty guidelines, 100% for a family of four is $25,100 for example, with 300% being $75,300.*

**BENEFICIARIES BY LIVING SITUATION**

- **Renters**: 10,022 (37%)
- **Homeowners**: 11,999 (45%)
- **Other**: 4,797 (18%)

*Other represents homeless individuals, people staying with friends or family, or other situations beyond the stated categories.*

**BENEFICIARIES BY AGE**

- **65 +**: 13,349 (6%)
- **46 - 64**: 141,335 (68%)
- **18 - 30**: 21,101 (10%)
- **31 - 45**: 18,016 (9%)
- **Less than 18**: 14,634 (7%)

*Through the innovative work of Texas Children’s Hospital in partnership with Mental Health America, over 100,000 youth have been served.*

*Demographic and income data is the reported aggregate of all submitted entries with some grantees not collecting or reporting this data.*
These are reported households served to date. Round 3 and Round 4 grants are still in progress and we expect to receive and share information on households served through 2020. Basic needs services were omitted due to potential overlap with other service categories.

A small amount of overlap between households served amongst multiple grantees may have occurred, as data was collected by zip code, not address.

In downtown (zip code 77002) the Coalition for the Homeless and New Home Housing supported over 600+ households from the George R. Brown shelter out of potential homelessness through securing temporary and eventually permanent housing.

The percentage noted is the number of beneficiaries served divided by total FEMA applications from how area median income (AMI) residents (80% or below)
"A 49 year old Vietnamese immigrant male who lives with his spouse and two toddler children in an apartment he owns came to us and asked us to help him with a FEMA Appeal. He told us that he had was denied by FEMA after the hurricane and even appealed, but did not get approved. We sent in an appeal for him and within six days, FEMA had approved him for $1,030.90 assistance. This client was highly grateful as he is unemployed and this money helped him mitigate the damage caused by Hurricane Harvey to his family’s property.” Boat People SOS - Houston

“My family is very grateful to Avenue. After attending the orientation, I started working with Matt, my case worker. He was able to assist us in various forms. Avenue partnered up with other organizations to help me a great deal even though I did not qualify for the full repair service because of my zip code. Wesley Community Center helped me with financial assistance for purchasing building supplies, Avenue connected me to a disaster grant from Federal Home Loan Bank, Rotary Club for furniture, MAM for appliances and two trucks of donated building materials that Avenue obtained through other organizations. All this worked together to get the building material, appliances and housewares I needed to be able to return to a finished home with my sons. I am so thankful to be back in my home! Client of Avenue CDC

“Harvey Home Connect was a blessing to me and my family. They connected us to a nonprofit that restored our home, and we’re now living in it. We’re a happy family once again. The [Harvey Home Connect] application process was really simple. I’m not computer savvy, but once my daughter showed me how to do it, it was easy.” Client of Harvey Home Connect (HHRF in partnership with SBP)

**GRANT HIGHLIGHTS**

- HHRF granted $7.6 Million to Texas Children’s Hospital Baylor College of Medicine, and the University of Texas Foundation / UTHealth to embed behavioral health care into their primary care settings across Harris County. This is a systems-level change that represents best practice thinking about how to maximize access and impact of behavioral health services in a community.

- HHRF granted $10.3 Million to 41 organizations providing disaster case management in the Houston area. Disaster case managers help our most vulnerable populations access all of the resources they need to get back on their feet after a disaster. This includes $7 Million to BakerRipley to hire and deploy over 90 case managers in Harris County and Houston.

- In partnership with the national disaster response nonprofit SBP, HHRF has developed a common application for low to moderate income seekers of home repair services. Seekers of home repair can fill out an application at www.HarveyHomeConnect.org and get connected with a nonprofit that can repair their Hurricane Harvey Damage. This unprecedented system can be activated for future disasters in the Houston region and beyond!

- HHRF granted $4.6 Million to Lone Star Legal Aid, Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program, Inc., Equal Justice Works, Disability Rights Texas, Boat People SOS, and the University of Houston Law Foundation to provide community outreach and free disaster legal services to Hurricane Harvey survivors to help them gain stability, recover and rebuild. This funding will help families gain access to FEMA funds, clear their titles and deeds to gain access to home repair services, overcome landlord-tenant issues and much more.