



**CHARITABLE
CONTRIBUTIONS**

8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271

TulalipCares.org

Funds Distribution Report

Recipient Organization:

Hopelink

Address:

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Redmond, WA 98052

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Organization's General Goals:

Hopelink's mission is to promote self-sufficiency for all members of our community; we help people make lasting change.

Date of Award:

2021 Q4

Level:

\$2,501 to \$5,000

For more information, please read the attached report from Hopelink.

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Report to the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions on Hopelink's Community Services Program for Fiscal Year 2022

On March 22, 2022, Hopelink received your generous grant of \$██████ to support our Community Services program. This interim report is an update on Hopelink's accomplishments, in part as a result of your gift. In a year like no other, together, we have helped stabilize lives.

Program Metrics

The ongoing pandemic continues to create an increase in demand for food and financial assistance.

We distributed an estimated 5,438,000 pounds of food in fiscal year 2022 from our five food markets. For context, we distributed 4,171,613 pounds in pre-pandemic fiscal year 2019.

In fiscal year 2022, our Financial Resiliency program distributed \$2,481,761 in total financial assistance. For context, in pre-pandemic fiscal year 2019, Hopelink distributed \$491,126.

Client Story – Food Assistance Program

Hopelink drives a food bank truck, called the Mobile Market, out into our community to assist those with barriers to transportation. During a stop in Kenmore, a Mobile Market customer stated he had worked in construction for ten years, but he was currently unable to find employment in his field. He stated gas prices were so high that he could not afford to drive and that times had become very hard for him and his family. He said he was surprised the Mobile Market was able to distribute as much food as it does and that he was very grateful for our assistance in providing for his family.

Food Assistance Program Updates

We are proud to announce that our five food banks have reopened in the grocery store model, and we have rebranded them as *Hopelink Markets*. We are retiring the phrase *food bank*. Our goal is to normalize seeking food assistance and to restore choice and dignity to our program participants.

For the safety of our clients, staff, and volunteers, COVID-19 forced us to discontinue the grocery store model in early 2020. Instead, we handed out boxes of pre-packed shelf stable food along with bags of fresh produce for over two years during the height of the pandemic. It was critical that we continued to provide food during the global health crisis even if it was a suboptimal delivery method.



We are thrilled and proud to announce that on May 2, 2022, we reopened the Hopelink Markets! Wanting to avoid opening the markets only to be forced to close them again due to COVID after the surge of the

Omicron strain, we took a little extra time to further devise a plan that would keep our clients and staff safe. We ramped up our staff and volunteer base to account for the significantly greater workforce needed to staff markets rather than just distribute boxes.

Our Food Team worked diligently to improve the client experience when participants come to the market. Our markets are welcoming, well lit, clean and spacious, and offer a dignified environment as well as culturally appropriate, and health conscience food choices. Recognizing the diversity of our clientele, we post all signage in four languages: English, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese.



We trained all staff plus new and returning volunteers on Hopelink's newly adopted Community Guidelines to offer a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment. Volunteers are stationed around the market to engage clients with a trauma informed approach. We are becoming our clients' neighborhood market with the goal of serving each household we can in a meaningful, impactful way.

Client response is overwhelmingly positive with much more food and much more choice including fresh and frozen food, baby

items, cleaning supplies, and pet food. We have witnessed tears of joy and received many thanks and words of appreciation. Clients have indicated that Hopelink is "giving me my dignity back."

Client Story - Financial Resiliency Program

Our client, K., experienced financial challenges since losing her job in the construction industry due to COVID-19 and due to injuries and medical issues. Without income, K. fell behind on her rent. Our Financial Resiliency program was able to assist her with \$3,000 bringing her rent current. K. was also referred to Hopelink's Employment program, Energy Assistance program, and to a partner organization for gasoline cards in order for her to be able to attend her medical appointments. By working with the Employment program, K. will be able to stabilize her financial situation with a return to the workforce.

Financial Resiliency Program Updates

After two years of eviction moratoriums and eviction moratorium bridges, we began to see the first of the COVID-related eviction cases in the January and February timeframe.

Eviction support is something that Hopelink has historically done. That we have been prioritizing eviction cases even before the pandemic, speaks to the fact that the housing crisis has always been with us. However, cases are now more complex. We have put new processes in place for immediate and timely service to these clients. We are continually training and updating our staff on the new laws, procedures, resources, and tenant rights.

A little-known, additional benefit to renters inside the eviction moratoriums was that rent amounts were frozen in place and could not be raised for the length of the moratoriums. Now with moratoriums lifted, rents are rising again. Clients are being squeezed by inflation. They have stated to us that they are spending more and more of their income on gas to commute to work and are worried about how to pay that increased rent.

January and February also ushered in a spike in the need for certain households to isolate for days due to a COVID exposure or a school closure. Note that this was not necessarily that entire workplaces were shutting down but rather that individual households were impacted by periodic loss of income just as they experienced an increase in rents, gasoline, and groceries.

King County's Eviction Prevention and Rent Assistance Program (EPRAP) had been a major source of rental assistance funds and the first stop for King County residents owing back rent until this program exhausted its funds around the March timeframe. Hopelink has been able to support several clients who could no longer be served by the County.



Hopelink is not immune to the tight job market and the Great Resignation, as it is being called. We have had staffing challenges. Staff does turn over and new

hires have to be on-boarded and trained in the requirements of the Financial Resiliency Program and how to give our clients an excellent, culturally competent experience that is also audit-compliant. We have accepted the fact that we might be constantly hiring and training for the foreseeable future.

As we appear to be exiting the pandemic, we are preparing to bring back the option of in-person appointments for our clients in addition to a telephone option, depending on the client's choice. We have surveyed our clients and they seem to prefer telephone appointments. We predict that the majority will continue to elect telephone appointments because of the high price of gasoline. We are excited to meet with those who will choose in-person appointments, and these will begin in the next couple of months. To prepare for this, we provided all Community Services staff with refresher courses on our Community Guidelines which are classes on building a welcoming, inclusive, respectful, and safe experience for clients at Hopelink plus de-escalation skills anticipating the fraught nature of these times. We also gave service center re-orientations and walk-throughs to those staff who have been working from home for some time.

Thank You!

Though we are hopefully, cautiously exiting the pandemic, our clients still face many challenges. We thank you for your partnership and hope you will continue to support Hopelink and our community into the future.