

MARC MEDIA ADVISORY

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Local governments, public health departments and philanthropic organizations accelerate efforts to address the impact of COVID-19

Working together to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on communities across the Kansas City region, five philanthropic foundations, area counties and the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) have joined forces to supplement public health pandemic response efforts and more fully address the needs of vulnerable populations.

The public-private partnership has committed approximately \$2.5 million to increase the region's testing capacity, enhance availability and analysis of regional COVID-19 health and medical data, facilitate the purchase of personal protective equipment and laboratory capacity, develop a communication strategy to promote proactive and preventative health behaviors among the public and at-risk groups, and support community organizations assisting residents who test positive or are exposed to the virus.

"Increasing the number of COVID-19 tests and the speed of results is essential to halting community spread of the virus," said Joe Connor, assistant county manager for Johnson County, Kansas. "The funding announced by Johnson County will help ensure that thousands of residents and workers in the county are tested before the end of the year."

Johnson County officials allocated \$400,000 of funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to enhance regional response efforts. The Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas committed \$250,000 in CARES Act dollars to support the partnership. Private foundations awarded \$1.85 million to expand recovery and response.

Philanthropic foundations involved in the partnership include:

- Health Forward Foundation
- REACH Healthcare Foundation
- Hall Family Foundation
- Marion and Henry Bloch Family Foundation
- Greater Kansas City Community Foundation – COVID-19 Community Fund

"People of color, low-income and essential workers face a higher risk of contracting and becoming seriously ill from COVID-19," said Qiana Thomason, president and CEO of the Health Forward Foundation. "As we move forward, our region needs public, private and philanthropic support to combat the biggest public health crisis of our time and ensure those most in need have the resources they need to stay safe and healthy."

"Kansas City area residents cross city, county and state lines every day to work, shop and take care of other needs -- affirming the necessity of a regional response plan," said Brenda Sharpe, president and

CEO of the REACH Healthcare Foundation. “This effort recognizes that reality and builds on the collective strength of public health, community and government agencies to respond efficiently so that we can stabilize our region's health and economy as quickly as possible.”

CARES Act and private funding will support the following work to fight the public health pandemic, including:

COVID-19 Regional Coordination Hub:

The hub will support the development, posting, analysis and reporting on COVID-19 health and medical activity in the greater Kansas City area. MARC currently pulls data daily from local public health departments to create a regional [dashboard](#) of COVID-19 tests, positive cases, deaths and other information. The most recent addition to the hub is hospital data, which includes hospital capacity, ICU bed use and ventilator use. The hub supplements the data analytical capabilities of local public health departments by creating a regional picture on the extent of the virus and its impacts in the region.

Coordination and Deployment of Testing Teams:

The partnership will support deployment of a regional network of COVID-19 testing teams to supplement testing conducted by local public health departments. This network of local health organizations, Federally Qualified Health Centers, other safety-net clinics, hospitals and others will deploy teams to group homes, long-term care facilities, employers and community organizations where additional testing is requested.

Communications:

MARC, local public health risk communicators and C19KC/Comeback KC, a private-sector task force, will work together to carry out a communication strategy educating the public and vulnerable populations about COVID-19 and encourage behavior change around protective measures, testing and flu vaccination. The goal is to provide factual, easy-to-understand and culturally appropriate information on the science related to COVID-19 and encourage individuals to take actions that protect their families and help the community recover from the pandemic.

MARC is working with the Regional Association of Public Information Officers and local public health departments on public surveys and focus groups to increase understanding of resident awareness, attitudes and actions related to COVID-19. This market research will help shape communications and other community actions.

Community Engagement:

MARC will help local public health departments engage community organizations serving vulnerable populations to encourage participation in COVID-19 testing events and to provide resources to individuals directly impacted by the virus. MARC will contract with community organizations to provide support to people who test positive for COVID-19, or are exposed to those with the virus, and provide funds to assist families required to isolate or quarantine.

Funds will also help address supply chain issues during the pandemic. MARC will continue working with health and medical agencies to determine needs for personal protective equipment (PPE), testing supplies, and laboratory processing and contact tracing capacity.

For more information about the COVID-19 response efforts in the Kansas City region, visit [PrepareMetroKC.org](#). To find out about COVID-19 testing locations and upcoming testing events, visit [ComeBackKC.com](#).

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