

EITC Funders Network

2020 Annual Report

Since its inception of the EITC Funders Network in 2004, Nagle & Associates has provided staff and operational support for the Network. The Network aims to provide support and information to funders related to the EITC by staying abreast of and identifying field-wide concerns and providing a platform for discussion and exchange in order to help funders shape the field according to emerging best practices; be more informed about EITC and its benefits; and collaborate more effectively with each other and their grantees.

Steering Committee: Network staff works closely with EITC Funders Network Steering Committee members to identify critical issues in the field and programmatic opportunities for the Network. The EITC Funders Network added one new steering committee member this past year: Danielle Goonan of The Rockefeller Foundation. Leslie Moore of The Annie E. Casey Foundation replaced her colleague Don Baylor, and long-time member Kim McMillan moved on from her role at the Foundation for the Mid South as well as the Steering Committee in August.

The 2020 EITC Funders Network was guided by a Steering Committee comprised of:

- Isabel Barrios, Greater New Orleans Foundation
- Erin Currier, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Elisa De La Vara, Arizona Community Foundation
- Danielle Goonan, The Rockefeller Foundation
- Leslie Moore, The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Melanie Styles, The Abell Foundation
- Kelly Wagoner, The Piton Foundation

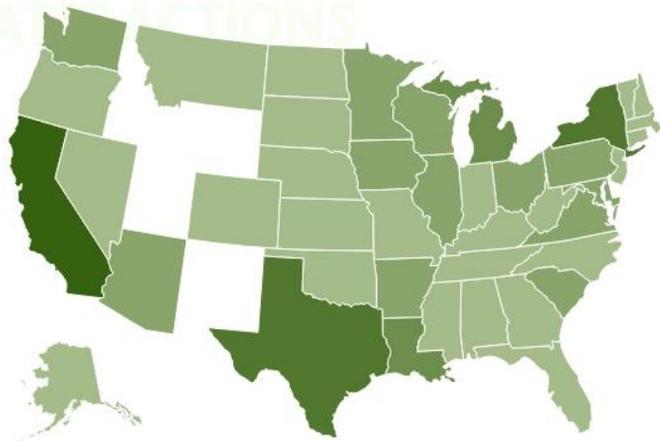
Staffing: After 5 years with the EITC Funders Network, Sabine Schoenbach moved on to another role in policy advocacy. We were thrilled to welcome Deneisha Thompson as the newest member of the EITC Funders Network team. After many years of providing direct service to the poorest communities in New York City, Deneisha spent the past 8 years as a consultant working with communities to build partnerships, capacity and social capital while dismantling oppressive systems that target people living in poverty and BIPOCS.

Membership: Throughout 2020, we added a total of 17 new members through a combination of membership requests and in-person outreach. At the end of the year, the EITC Funders Network membership number stood at 292, a slight increase from the prior year. Although the numbers shift throughout each year – primarily due to staff turnover and new member requests, year-end numbers have remained relatively stable over the last five years, hovering just under 300.

We currently have members in 42 of the 50 states - all states except Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. The membership number stayed constant from the previous year (we gained membership in Rhode Island, but lost membership in Nevada). We continue to see the highest number of members in California, New York, and Texas. See the map below for membership distribution by state.

2020 EITC Funders Network Membership by State

MOST POPULAR
US AFFILIATIONS

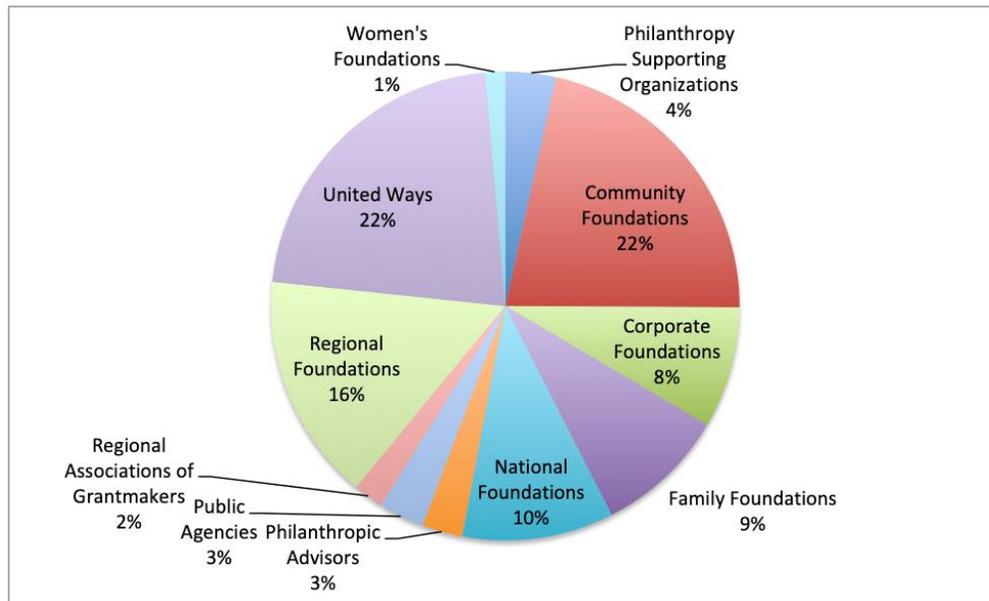


	1-5 members
	6-10 members
	11-15 members
	16-20 members
	>20 members

Source: Constant Contact membership report, 12/23/2020. Note that this number refers to members, not organizations – in some cases, we have multiple members representing the same organization, though this distribution does provide a rough geographical overview.

Members represent 207 organizations or groups, with the largest numbers of members representing Community Foundations (22 percent); United Ways (22 percent); Regional Foundations (16 percent); Family Foundations (9 percent) and National Foundations (10 percent). These percentages refer to individual members, not organizations, though they do provide a rough estimate of organizational representation. The year-to-year distribution has remained essentially unchanged over the last three years, with a slight increase (2 percentage points) in United Way representation in 2020, perhaps due to the increased focus and programming on VITA transitions in the wake of COVID-19.

2020 EITC Funders Network Membership by Type of Organization



Source: Constant Contact membership report, 12/23/2020.

Membership engagement is intentionally structured to provide a range of engagement opportunities. Being on the membership list means, at a minimum, members are receiving email updates, event announcements, and quarterly eNewsletters. We encourage additional engagement in many of these communications (for example, often ending the newsletter with an invitation to respond and provide feedback or take an action step). We also provide opportunities for feedback and ideas on programming within each webinar and meeting. Finally, we have created forms on our website to solicit input.

EITC Pooled Fund: To help improve the efforts to protect current and create new state EITCs, the EITC Funders Network and the Economic Opportunity Funders (EOF) administer and oversee The EITC Rapid Response, Campaign and Policy Development Fund. The three funds are guided by an advisory group, supported by three national funders, and administered by the EITC Funders Network and EOF in partnership with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Hatcher Group. Participating foundations in the EITC Pooled Fund include: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust, The Rockefeller Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and an anonymous donor.

In 2020, The Fund awarded a State EITC Rapid Response Funds to one state (NJ), State EITC Campaign Funds to eight states (CA, CO, HI, MD, MA, OK, OR NM), State EITC Policy Development Funds to two states (FL, ID, PA) and Federal EITC Campaign Funds to two national groups. The remaining funds were

allocated to support staffing the administration of the project, and technical assistance contracts. To date, \$4,248,500 has been awarded to 35 networks.

National partners (CBPP and the Hatcher Group) provided TA to awardees and ensured tools and learnings from The Fund were widely shared and leveraged across states. An interactive, online map illustrates the reach and outcomes of the RRF and PDF and can be found at <http://EOFunders.org/EITCRapidResponseFund.php>.

The Fund also supported an update of an [EITC Interactive data tool](#), which provides users with access to IRS data on federal individual income tax filers. Information on filers who claim the EITC is available for all ZIP codes, cities, counties, metropolitan areas, states, state legislative districts, and Congressional districts in the United States.

2020 Program Overview and COVID-19 Shifts: In early 2020, together with Economic Opportunity Funders (EOF), we released a resource page and interview series on **Universal Basic Income** and coordinated our **annual policy webinar** together with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Then COVID hit. Based on member and partner interest and input, we had presented a workplan for 2020 to the Steering Committee with an intention of building on the previous year's foundations around the health impacts of the EITC as well as issues of racial and gender equity and the tax code. While we continued to foster relationships and conversations in these spaces, the urgency of the VITA community's rapid transitions in the wake of COVID caused us to direct our attention in the Spring and Summer to a series of peer-to-peer conversations and resource dissemination on **VITA innovations and adaptations**. Over the Summer, the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism, having spurred a new moment of reckoning and national uprising for racial justice, also provided a platform for us to continue and deepen our conversations around **racial equity and the tax code**, though this conversation was not held via an in-person convening as originally planned. Our ongoing conversations around **Health Equity and the EITC** resulted in a co-authored piece in the GIH newsletter in September. The details of this work are described in more detail below.

Resource Page: Universal Basic Income (UBI): Leading up to 2020, in partnership with Economic Opportunity Funders (EOF) and in response to member interest, we began creating a page on our respective websites dedicated to resources on Universal Basic Income (<https://eitcfunders.org/focus-areas/universal-basic-income/>).

We connected with experts in the field to create a series of short informational videos. Mia Birdsong, Senior Fellow, Economic Security Project spoke about the ways in which our culture defines work, the social safety net and the broader struggle for meaning and dignity. She also spoke about ways in which UBI can move us closer to racial equity. Robert Greenstein, Founder and Past-President of Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, spoke about some of the cautions against pushing for UBI in our political time and the relationship between the idea of UBI and economic justice. We also collated (and continued to update) a resource list on UBI. COVID-19 sparked a reinvigorated conversation on the power of cash payments, and we gathered articles and resources on cash payments in the wake of the pandemic.

Programming: Webinars, Peer-to-Peer Conversations, and a Funder Convening:

Webinars provide a platform to disseminate information about emerging issues in the field and to build partnerships. Typically, the EITC Funders Network hosts 3-4 webinars per year. In 2020, the Network hosted its annual policy webinar in March and then shifted gears in the wake of COVID-19 to coordinate three peer-to-peer funder conversations on the innovations, adaptations, and future of VITA. In addition, in October, we co-hosted, together with Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR), Closing the Women’s Wealth Gap, and Economic Opportunity Funders (EOF), a virtual funder convening on taxes and equity. Links to descriptions of these events as well as registration numbers are represented in the chart below. Recordings of each event were available and disseminated after the events either through the website (<https://eitcfunders.org/network-events/>) or upon request.

2020 EITC Funders Network Webinars and Funder Conversations

DATE	2019 EVENTS	REGISTRANTS
March 2020	Webinar: The EITC Funders Network Annual Policy Webinar	19
April 2020	Peer-to-Peer Conversation: Tax Season Shifts and VITA Site Closures: Responding to COVID-19	19
May 2020	Peer-to-Peer Conversation: VITA Innovations and Adaptations in the Current Moment: A Conversation for Funders	21
October 2020	Funder Convening: What do Taxes Have to Do with Equity	78
November 2020	Peer-to-Peer Conversation: Eye on the Long-Term: COVID-19, VITA, and the Future of Free Tax Preparation	25
Total		162

We coordinated evaluation follow-ups for all webinars, conversations, and the funder convening we hosted; however, our evaluation response rate for these was very low, similar to previous years. The few responses we did receive were positive, but it’s very difficult to make any generalizations from such few responses.

Peer-to-Peer Conversations and a Resource Page: VITA Adaptations and Innovations During COVID-19:

The COVID-19 crisis completely altered the VITA landscape and tax preparation in this extended 2020 tax season. The VITA community was forced to retool to meet the moment for its existing clients - without brick-and-mortar sites and in-person tax prep - and took on the additional challenge of reaching non-filers eligible for stimulus checks. EITC Funders Network staff spent a considerable amount of time in the late Spring and through the Summer, hosting both formal and informal conversations about the shifts in the VITA world and aiding in the dissemination of tools and resources.

After our first peer-to-peer conversation in April, staff put together a COVID-19 Resource page on the EITC Funders Network's website with categories devised in response to member input (<https://eitcfunders.org/focus-areas/covid-19-pandemic-response-and-resources/>). The page was updated throughout the Summer with resources on the EITC and Tax Policy during COVID-19, VITA and Tax Preparation Adaptions, the CARES Act and COVID-19 Relief and a focus on immigrant communities, and concern around predatory lending and practices.

We hosted a total of three peer-to-peer discussion group calls throughout the year:

- **Discussion 1: April 1, 2020:** This first call, attended by 19 funders, was scheduled in response to the major shifts from in-person tax preparation services as well as the newly announced tax deadline extension. This call provided a table to share concerns in the field, to learn how funders and the field were adjusting to this moment, and to share resources and best practices. Kelly Wagoner, EITC Funders Network steering committee member, kicked off the conversation with reflections on ways the Colorado tax prep community was adjusting. The subsequent discussion followed up on areas of concern, plans for sharing resources, and staying connected.
- **Discussion 2: May 14, 2020:** This follow-up call, attended by 19 funders, provided funders with examples of ways in which VITA sites and the free tax prep community were continuing to respond to the needs of low-wage tax filers as well as the gaps and challenges that persisted. Rebecca Thompson of the Taxpayer Opportunity Network laid the groundwork by providing some examples from the field; Annelise Grimm from Code for America described the expanding work of GetYourRefund.org; and Cary Gladstone from Granite United Way and Rachel Isacoff from the Rockefeller Foundation led a funder discussion on strategy.
- **Discussion 3: November 17, 2020:** This final peer-to-peer discussion, attended by 21 funders, provided an opportunity to hear reflections on the past season, discuss lessons learned, and talk together as a funder community about ways to apply these learnings and ensure and expand access to critical VITA services going forward. Liz Brister of Entergy moderated the discussion with Julie Hahn Hodgson from Citi Foundation, Courtney O'Reilly from Tax Help Colorado, and Rebecca Thompson from the Taxpayer Opportunity Network.

In addition to the three peer-to-peer funder calls, staff was in regular contact with local United Ways/funders, United Way Worldwide, the Taxpayer Opportunity Network, IRS SPEC as well as such organizations as Entergy, National Consumer Law Center, and Center for Financial Empowerment to learn more about challenges and opportunities that COVID wrought and to further connect funder conversations.

Funder Virtual Convening: What do Taxes have to do with Equity? Connecting Policy and Grassroots Strategies to Advance Race, Gender and Immigrant Equity through Tax Policy (October 2020)



Building on our foundational work on equity and taxes, we co-hosted, together with EOF, GCIR, and Closing the Women’s Wealth Gap, a funder conversation exploring the landscape of tax policy and structures and the opportunities to create pathways to racial equity and economic opportunity. We had originally planned this event as an in-person meeting at the Prosperity Summit (following up on our 2018 meeting), but were able to adapt the conversation to an interactive virtual format. Seventy-eight regional and national funders attended the two-hour convening.

Convening Overview: Moderated by Cassandra McKee of Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, the convening was divided into two sessions. The first session featured funder voices and explored reasons why charitable foundations are supporting work to change tax policy as a way to increase economic security, address equity and build power. The panel, which included Danielle Goonan of the Rockefeller Foundation and Dr. Carmen Rojas of the Marguerite Casey Foundation also explored questions, challenges and opportunities raised in this work. A small group discussion followed this panel to discuss key takeaways and questions raised during the panel.

The second session featured a panel of field experts - Lizeth Chacon of the Colorado People’s Alliance, Carol Hedges of the Colorado Fiscal Institute, Elyssa Koidin Schmier of MomsRising, and Michael Russo of the Advancement Project California – who shared policy, community engagement, and narrative change strategies being undertaken in states and nationally to adjust the tax code and advance racial, gender and immigrant equity. While addressing a variety of policy changes--tax credits for immigrant workers in Colorado, school funding equity in California, and tax credits for working families nationally -- the speakers spoke to the fact that these efforts share similar strategies to use the tax code to improve equity, center the most impacted communities in the work, and build long-term capacity across the ecosystem to create change.

Recordings of both sessions can be found on our website: <https://eitcfunders.org/october-2020-funder-virtual-convening-what-do-taxes-have-to-do-with-equity/>

Health Equity and the EITC: Since 2017, the EITC Funders Network has been exploring the growing body of research on the intersections between the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and health outcomes. We’ve entered this space by through the coordination of webinars and funder meetings and through ongoing conversations with Grantmakers in Health and individual health funders in order to raise awareness of the research and to increase the connections between economic security and health funders.

Although a more robust workplan around this area of work had to be postponed this year to make room for the work on VITA transitions in the wake of COVID-19, we continued to update our EITC and Improving Health Outcomes resource page (<https://eitcfunders.org/focus-areas/eitc-and-health/>) and to foster conversations at the intersect of economic security and health equity.

Our September eNewsletter interview focused on the work of the California Community Foundation’s investment in EITC outreach (<https://eitcfunders.org/september-2020-newsletter-interview-california-community-foundation/>), fostering a relationship that had been built at the prior year’s GIH convening. We also partnered with Giridhar Mallya of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to co-author a “View from the Field” article in the GIH newsletter on health equity and the EITC (<https://www.gih.org/views-from-the-field/health-equity-and-the-earned-income-tax-credit-eitc-covid-19-spotlights-the-need-for-cross-sector-collaborations/>). We plan to continue building on these foundations in 2021.

Email Engagement: In addition to alerting members to Network events, we periodically send substantive updates to our members via email as well as Network and philanthropy supporting organizations’ updates. Email engagement, overall, stayed relatively stable in 2020 from the previous year, though the average open rates dropped a few percentage points.

EITC Funders Network 2020 Email Engagement (in comparison to 2018, 2019)

	2018	2018 Average Open Rate	2019	2019 Average Open Rate	2020	2020 Average Open Rate
Total emails sent	54	29%	28	26%	27	19%
Event emails*	42	29%	17	28%	15	12%
Newsletter emails	4	29%	4	25%	4	21%
Updates/Alerts	8	29%	7	26%	8	25%

Source: Constant Contact email report, 12/26/2020. The open rate of the event emails varied depending on the recipients - e.g., the first invitation is sent to the entire list and the subsequent emails are sent to non-responders and then to registrants. The open rate for the event emails noted here is an estimate and is based on the initial email sent to the entire list for the basis of comparison (*note that this measurement differs from years prior to 2019).

eNewsletters: Each year we publish four eNewsletters that highlight emerging issues in the field and feature interviews with funders or researchers. We also featured an interview with a field partner this year (United Way Worldwide) in the context of COVID-19 and Economic Impact Payment access. Newsletters are emailed to all members and posted on our website (<https://eitcfunders.org/newsletters/>).

1. The [March 2020 eNewsletter](#) featured an interview with **The Rockefeller Foundation’s Danielle Goonan**, Director, Economic Opportunities Investments and Grantmaking, U.S. Equity and Economic Opportunity Initiative. Danielle, now an EITC Funder’s Network steering committee member, discussed Rockefeller’s strategies in the tax credit space and the ways investment in the EITC and CTC advance the goals of the Foundation’s Equity and Economic Opportunity Initiative.
2. The [June 2020 eNewsletter](#) featured an interview with **United Way Worldwide’s Laura Scherler**, Senior Director of Economic Mobility and Corporate Solutions; **Barbara Saverino**, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, and **Bryndan Stueve**, Manager, Community Impact and Economic Mobility discussing program and policy strategies in light of COVID-19 and the organization’s Economic Impact Payment Access outreach campaign.
3. The [September 2020 eNewsletter](#) featured an interview with the **California Community Foundation’s Rosemary Veniegas**, Senior Program Officer, Health; **Rosie Arroyo**, Senior Program Officer, Immigration; and **Ellah Ronen**, Senior Program Officer, LA n Sync. Rosemary, Rosie, and Ellah discussed the Foundation’s path to investing in EITC outreach and the ways this work fits into CCF’s grantmaking strategy and mission.
4. The [December 2020 eNewsletter](#) featured a guest post by **Bob Greenstein**, founder and Past-President of the **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**. Bob has been a steadfast leader in the tax policy space and a valued partner of the EITC Funders Network for many years. Prior to his retirement at the end of 2020, Bob shared his insights and recommendations for the future of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

EITC Funders Newsletter Open Rates, 2017-2020

Enewsletters	2017 Opens	2018 Opens	2019 Opens	2020 Opens
Average	28%	29%	25%	21%
December*	29%	27%	23%	16%
September	25%	28%	26%	23%
June	27%	29%	22%	28%
March	29%	32%	27%	18%

Source: Constant Contact email report, 12/26/2020. *note, the December newsletter was released just days before the compiling of open rates, thus the rate is noticeably lower.

Average newsletter open rates decreased a few percentage points in 2020 (see above). It’s important to note that not all eNewsletter readers access the newsletter through the eblast. Newsletters can also be accessed directly from the website, which according to the analytics, is one of the most visited pages on the website.

EITC Funders Network Website: (www.eitcfunders.org) –We began analyzing data on user experience in 2015 and over the last five years have made changes to increase accessibility and made efforts to update content more frequently. In 2020, we regularly updated website content in the issue areas and newsletter page and regularly posted information about upcoming and recent events. We also created new resource pages on Universal Basic Income and COVID-19 Responses (described above). We updated sliders to link to both upcoming events and news updates. Over the course of 2020, our website experienced:

- 2,669 unique visitors (up from 1,962 the previous year)
- 3,426 2,615 sessions (up from 2,615 the previous year)
- Users spent an average of 1 minute 46 seconds 2 minutes and 6 seconds on the site (down from 2 minutes 6 seconds in 2019)

The increase in unique visitors and sessions could perhaps be attributed to the urgency presented by COVID-19 and new COVID-19 resources posted to our page as well as our work on equity and the tax code. The top pages in 2020 included the home page and our new pandemic resources page.

Working in Partnership to Build the Field: Throughout 2020, the Network partnered with partner philanthropic support organizations on a number of fronts. We worked very closely with GCIR and Economic Opportunity Funders as well as Closing the Women’s Wealth Gap to co-host the funder convening on equity and taxes in October. We also collaborated closely with EOF on the UBI resource page. We consulted with the Asset Funders Network on several fronts and deepened our relationship with Grantmakers in Health (GIH) through the coordination the “Views from the Field” article published in September. We continue to work closely with the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, Prosperity Now and the Taxpayer Opportunity Network, the Tax Policy Center, United Way Worldwide and other national field leaders to stay abreast of field-wide concerns and strategize about building the capacity of funders to address emergent needs.