



2026

Critical Needs Response Fund

Navigating Uncertain Times

Santa Barbara County's nonprofits are holding essential community systems together, but sudden funding shifts and rising needs put that work under strain. The Critical Needs Response Fund helps organizations stay responsive, steady, and effective when communities need them most.

Structural Challenges



Funding is disrupted

Rapid changes in public funding are creating gaps across health care, food, and housing programs, threatening essential community services.



Demand is rising

More community members are turning to nonprofits for help at the very moment resources are tightening.



Capacity is stretched

Nonprofits are working hard to respond, but many lack the capacity to meet rising needs.



Flexibility is scarce

Flexible funding is critical when organizations need to adapt quickly and respond where support is needed most.

Our Approach

The Critical Needs Response Fund provides short-term, timely, flexible grants to local nonprofits — helping organizations stabilize, retain staff, and expand capacity. The Santa Barbara Foundation serves as community convener, advocate, and philanthropic first responder: assessing needs and deploying resources in real time.



Photos by: Veronica Slavin

Our Impact

Since launching, the Critical Needs Response Fund has awarded over **\$800,000** in grants to local nonprofits delivering essential services across Santa Barbara County. Demand continues to grow, making continued investment more important than ever.

Examples of Impact



Housing Stability

People's Self-Help Housing Corporation received funding to provide last-resort emergency assistance countywide — helping prevent evictions, utility shutoffs, and housing instability for low-income families during moments of acute financial stress.



Food Access

Route One Farmers Market received funding to expand access to fresh, locally sourced food in Mid- and North County, supporting low-income residents and strengthening local food systems.



Legal Aid

California Rural Legal Assistance received funding to provide free legal aid and outreach for rural, low-income, and immigrant families — addressing urgent issues related to housing, education, labor rights, and environmental health.

Join Us

Your contribution allows the Santa Barbara Foundation to respond quickly as urgent needs emerge. Together, we can help nonprofit partners sustain essential services — from housing and food access to health care and legal support — so communities across Santa Barbara County remain stable, connected, and cared for.



Give Now

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