

WYOMING MAKERSPACES TAKE ON COVID-19

ABOUT PHORGE MAKERSPACE. Phorge Makerspace is a community of makers extending throughout Wyoming. A place in which people with shared interests can gather to work on projects while sharing ideas, equipment, and knowledge. A makerspace's interests can be truly diverse - including sewing, rocketry, fabrication, 3D printing, coding, woodworking, soap-making, and more. These spaces are also help to prepare those who need the critical 21st century skills in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

THE CHALLENGE. Phorge Makerspace made it a priority to close the supply chain gap for PPE by providing 3D printed equipment to local first responders, hospitals, and many other entities. Makerspaces from all around Wyoming raised their hand to form a northern group, Wyomakers, and a southern group, Wyoming Technology Coronavirus Coalition. Faced with a limitless demand, Phorge sought out Manufacturing Works, part of the MEP National Network™, for help finding funding.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Manufacturing Works, with the help of the Wyoming Business Council, began the process of guiding Phorge through the application process for a Community Block Development Grant (CBDG) and a Community Foundation Grant. Both required documenting need.

Manufacturing Works orchestrated a meeting with the Homeland Security County Coordinators to establish the ground work, including designing a questionnaire and facilitating distribution to applicable organizations. Manufacturing Works then created a tracking and distribution system for quality control across the Makerspaces. When a new PPE request comes in, it is sent off to the nearest Makerspace with capacity. If any piece of equipment had a defect, the order could be tracked back to where it came from and the problem fixed at the source.

After completing all proper documentation and preparing an estimated budget, it was time to apply. First, Manufacturing Works orchestrated a meeting with the City of Sheridan to have the CBDG funding voted on for hosting, as CBDG grants must be hosted by a state governing body. Once this passed the Wyoming Business Council needed to vote on a state level. Manufacturing Works' strong relationship with the Wyoming Business Council provided a quick response for an emergency meeting where the CBDG grant was voted on and soon passed. Manufacturing Works then leveraged their statewide relationships to put the right people in the room for the Community Foundation Grant. After orchestrating the meeting and presenting all of the hard work already done, a \$17,000 grant was made available.

These efforts resulted in manufacturing and distribution of PPE during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and supported a critical need for statewide health entities while propping up Wyoming manufacturing jobs.

"Manufacturing Works figured out exactly what we needed and didn't hesitate to jump in and make it happen! Our COVID-19 efforts were grown significantly when they jumped on board."

-Spencer Kuzara, Director

RESULTS



\$48,000 Community Block Development Grant



\$17,000 Community Foundation Grant



Aided in facilitation of **9** Makerspaces for one joint PPE production effort

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