

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE April 9, 2021

TO Honorable Members of the Workforce, Education, and Equity Committee

SUBJECT **Emma Lazarus Resilience Fund – After Action Report**

This memo describes the accomplished objectives and lessons learned through the implementation of the City of Dallas Emma Lazarus Resilience Fund, an unprecedented collaboration between the City of Dallas, Communities Foundation of Texas, United Way, PepsiCo and sixteen locally based nonprofits to provide direct relief to Dallas immigrant residents in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative was named after the famous 19th Century poet, Emma Lazarus, whose words, “give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” have been immortalized on the Statue of Liberty.

Background

In alignment with the Welcoming Dallas Plan, which includes the goal of promoting equitable access to services and opportunities for all residents, the Office of Equity and Inclusion – Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs Division (WCIA) applied for the Open Societies Fund grant opportunity to provide financial assistance to individuals who were left out of the federal economic relief programs.

Approximately 828,000 non-citizens reside in Dallas ([Vera Institute](#)). Most immigrant residents work in essential workforce areas including – healthcare, food supply, maintenance, and manufacturing ([New American Economy](#)). While making economic contributions and experiencing a disproportionate impact of the pandemic, many of immigrant residents were left out of federal economic relief programs.

In July 2020, Dallas was selected among 30 cities to receive a catalyst fund amount of \$500,000. Following the announcement of the fund, United Way of Metropolitan Dallas subsequently donated an additional \$100,000, growing the fund to a total of \$600,000 for residents in need.

In order to efficiently and effectively distribute assistance, WCIA entered into an agreement with Communities Foundation of Texas to create the Emma Lazarus Resilience Fund and to administer the process of selecting nonprofit partners who could provide direct cash to residents in need. Through the open application process, sixteen local nonprofits were selected to distribute cash payments to immigrant residents that were excluded from federal safety net programs.

Demographics of Families Served

The sixteen nonprofits provided a final report of the families served and a narrative of their experience delivering financial assistance. Part of the reporting process prioritized the protection of resident information, ensuring that aid recipients would not experience retribution or risk immigration enforcement.

In total, \$600,000 was distributed among 813 families that received cash assistance programs in the span of five months. One hundred percent of the funding went towards assistance for immigrant families that were left out of federal economic relief programs. The cash payments that families received ranged from \$500 to \$1,500 depending on the family size.

Reflective of the global diversity found in Dallas, recipients came from different continents including Central America (Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Colombia) South America (Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil), Africa (Chad, Sudan, Cameroon, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia) Asia (Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Middle East (Iran, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Syria)

Residents resided in the following zip codes: 75203, 75204, 75208, 75209, 75211, 75212, 75215, 75216, 75217, 75218, 75219, 75220, 75221, 75223, 75224, 75227, 75228, 75229, 75230, 75231, 75232, 75233, 75234, 75235, 75236, 75238, 75239, 75241, 75242, 75243, 75244, 75248, 75252, 75253, 75254, 75265, and 75287.

Lessons Learned

The main objective of the Emma Lazarus Resilience Fund was to get cash and other forms of direct relief to people in desperate need — many of whom our societies have nationally recognized as essential workers—and yet who have been excluded from federal emergency support. Through the implementation process our team has learned the following:

Launching a Private-Public Partnership to Advocate for Immigrants

Through the Emma Lazarus Resilience Fund, the City of Dallas used its platform to recognize the diversity and intersecting risks that immigrant residents face due to the pandemic while also mobilizing and building alliances with local philanthropic and community actors to develop an equitable response. This effort encouraged new organizations and philanthropic groups that had never formally partnered with the City prior on immigrant issues, making our city more institutionally connected. Additionally, the City of Dallas was able to develop a private-public system that could be scaled up and connect residents with direct relief, building our resilience for future economic crises and disruptions.

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Demonstrating Cash Assistance as an Effective Antipoverty Measure

In this pilot program, the City of Dallas tested out the use of direct cash payment as a method of relief that could be implemented on a broader scale as pandemic recovery efforts continue and expand.

Research demonstrates that about half of US families are asset poor, lacking sufficient savings to withstand a financial shock such as a job loss or health crisis. The number of families lacking sufficient liquid assets has been exasperated by the pandemic ([Urban Institute](#)).

While programs such as moratoria on evictions and utility shut offs provide a financial buffer for families, many still need financial support to stay or get current on other critical payments, such as transportation or internet access. Quickly delivering emergency funds sufficient to avoid hardship will help stabilize families in the near term.

Additionally, through the Emma Lazarus Resilience Fund , many families were connected with additional support services, including physical and mental health, banking services, legal and educational supports.

Partnering with Trusted Organizations to Improve Communication and Civic Engagement

Leveraging the Emma Lazarus Resilience Fund, the City of Dallas also received the Rapid Resilience grant through Welcoming America. This grant provided resources that allowed the City of Dallas to build a more robust response to COVID-19, which included a \$10,000 award and technical assistance from emergency management consultants that focus on equity and inclusion.

WCIA selected two organizations, The Concilio and ImmSchools, to host focus groups with immigrant residents. WCIA has partnered with these two organizations, not only to bring critical information to keep families safe during the pandemic, but also to receive feedback from immigrants directly on how to improve communications and community outreach. So far, three “learning circles” have been hosted with immigrant leaders to learn about the concerns and barriers that immigrants experience to accessing pandemic resources. WCIA has used this qualitative data to improve outreach on health and safety information to immigrant communities who have been most impacted by the pandemic.

Our hope is that the partnerships and experiences that have resulted from the Emma Lazarus Resilience Fund will ultimately sets up systems that help to protect the health and well-being of all Dallas residents in the longer term.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Christina da Silva, Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs Officer, Office of Equity and Inclusion at christina.dasilva@dallascityhall.com should you have any questions.

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Liz Cedillo-Pereira
Chief of Equity and Inclusion

[Appendix]

c: Honorably Mayor and City Council Members
T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Chris Caso, City Attorney
Mark Swann, City Auditor
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Kimberly Bizzor Tolbert, Chief of Staff to the City Manager

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Jon Fortune, Assistant City Manager
Joey Zapata, Assistant City Manager
Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Chief of Economic Development and Neighborhood Services
M. Elizabeth Reich, Chief Financial Officer
Directors and Assistant Directors

Appendix

Welcoming Dallas Strategic Plan:

<https://dallascityhall.com/departments/wcia/DCH%20Documents/COD-WCIA-Booklet.pdf>

New Americans in Dallas Economic Brief

http://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/02/G4G_Dallas_FINAL_DIGITAL.pdf

Immigrants in Healthcare by Metro-area

<https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/immigrants-healthcare-metros/>

Open Society Foundation Emma Lazarus Campaign Executive Summary

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/the-emma-lazarus-campaign-executive-summary>

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/what-the-us-still-owes-undocumented-workers>

Urban Institute: What Amount of Cash Can Help Buffer Families Against COVID-19 Economic Impacts

<https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/what-amount-cash-can-help-buffer-families-against-covid-19s-economic-impacts>