

THE EMMA LAZARUS CAMPAIGN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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International Migration Initiative
Open Society - U.S.

**OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS**

This document describes an unprecedented collaboration between the Open Society Foundations and partners across the United States to provide direct relief to hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants and vulnerable workers on a national scale during the 2020 pandemic—an initiative known as the Emma Lazarus Campaign. It captures core insights that can inform practice and policy at the municipal, state, and federal levels, as well as in the civil society and philanthropic sectors.

OVERVIEW

COVID-19 sparked the most significant economic crisis of our generation. Tens of millions of workers lost their jobs and were excluded from any kind of safety net. Undocumented immigrants—many of whom were hailed for doing essential work and caring for our loved ones—were deliberately left out of federal stimulus and disaster-response programs. The resulting economic hardship has been devastating, as millions struggle to buy food and pay for housing.

Yet at the same time, the pandemic catalyzed the most extensive locally led, national, direct-relief response of our time to meet the needs of undocumented immigrants, mixed-status families, and other vulnerable people. Local leaders in scores of cities, states, and counties across the United States joined with community-based organizations and philanthropies to establish parallel safety nets. These funds have addressed the immediate suffering of those most vulnerable to the economic fallout, particularly undocumented immigrants and other workers in the low-wage labor market.

These novel public-private partnerships have yielded valuable lessons, tools, and models, as well as critical insights into the spectrum of responses that address the economic fallout of the pandemic and of climate-related disasters in the United States. They are also creating a rich network of local government and non-governmental partners and national organizations grounded in local solutions and approaches.

ABOUT THE EMMA LAZARUS CAMPAIGN

Open Society launched the Emma Lazarus Campaign in March 2020 with an investment of \$32 million to catalyze and enable local responses in 30 jurisdictions across the United States. The goal was to build inclusive, innovative cash assistance programs for those excluded from federal relief. The Foundations granted an additional \$4.8 million to the National Domestic Workers Alliance as a core strategic partner in the campaign, with a particular emphasis on scaling up the Alia online platform for implementation in cash assistance funds.

From the pandemic's earliest days, it was clear that the most vulnerable workers and communities would suffer the greatest harms and have the hardest time accessing federal relief. Undocumented immigrants

and other vulnerable categories of persons were explicitly excluded from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, as well as from most emergency relief provided by states. This was despite the fact that low-wage, essential workers are the most likely to get sick, and that Black and Hispanic communities face the highest infection and death rates, as well as unemployment levels.

Local governments have been left to fill the gap in leadership and funding, partnering with community groups and philanthropies to set up emergency relief funds that protect the whole community by making relief available to everyone, including undocumented immigrants, dependent adults, and other potentially vulnerable persons who are at greatest risk of being left behind.

EMMA LAZARUS FUND: A BRIEF HISTORY

Emma Lazarus was the 19th century poet and activist whose words, “give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” have been immortalized on the Statue of Liberty. This is the third fund created by OSF in her name. The first, in 1997, assisted legal residents with the costs of naturalization after Congress cut access to federal benefits for legal non-citizen residents. The second, in 2015, supported the implementation of two federal programs, the Deferred Action for Parents of U.S. Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents and the expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, and also created the “Emma Lazarus Local Challenge” to spur additional funding at the local level.

OPEN SOCIETY EMMA LAZARUS INVESTMENTS

Emma Lazarus investments have several main goals:

- To get cash and other forms of direct relief to people in desperate need — many of whom our societies have finally recognized as essential workers—and yet who have been excluded from federal emergency support.
- To encourage and support political, NGO, community, and philanthropic actors at the local level to openly stand up for essential but excluded workers, especially undocumented immigrants—and to build alliances between the public and private-sectors to support these populations.
- To innovate and scale up locally led models that connect direct relief to longer-term solutions to expand the safety net and enable communities to be more resilient in future economic crises and disruptions.

- To build the power of community-based organizations like the National Domestic Workers Alliance (which advocates on behalf of domestic and home care workers) to establish a sustainable infrastructure so that governments, civil society, and local philanthropists can serve vulnerable communities on a lasting basis.
- To advocate for, inform, and inspire federal action for inclusive relief to the ongoing COVID-19 economic crisis and for structural change in immigration, worker, and safety net protections in the long term.

In April 2020, then Open Society President Patrick Gaspard directed the Foundations' first large commitment of \$20 million to New York City, which was the American epicenter of the pandemic at the time. The goal was to establish the NYC Immigrant Relief Fund, which reached 76,000 individuals in need. Open Society identified 20 additional localities across the United States to receive direct funding to set up similar funds to provide direct relief and strengthen local infrastructure. Through an intermediary partner, Accelerator for America, nine additional jurisdictions received Open Society funding and technical assistance to support the creation of cash-assistance programs.

The Emma Lazarus Campaign also partnered closely with the National Domestic Workers Alliance—an immigrant, worker-led organization—to scale up its Alia online platform to disseminate cash assistance, as well as to have the domestic workers alliance provide strategic, technical, and communications support to localities that were setting up their own funds to reach immigrant and worker populations.

Finally, Open Society supported a set of national organizations to enable cross-regional learning and sharing of models, as well as to strengthen advocacy at the state and national levels to spur broader system responses and to establish knowledge hubs that can strengthen and inform related strategies in the future.

Cities, States, Counties, and Organizations in the United States Directly Supported by the Emma Lazarus Campaign:

Cities, States, and Counties

- Atlanta
- Baltimore
- Boston
- California State
- Charlottesville
- Chicago
- Dallas
- Denver and State of Colorado
- Detroit
- Fairfax County
- Harris County, Texas
- Los Angeles
- New Orleans
- Nevada State
- New York City
- Philadelphia
- Pittsburgh
- Richmond
- Tucson
- Washington, D.C.

National Partners

- Accelerator for America
- Center for Financial Inclusion at
- Accion
- Alia
- Amalgamated Foundation
- Center for Law and Policy
- Cities for Action
- Grantmakers Concerned for Immigrants and Refugees
- Local Progress
- National Domestic Workers Alliance
- National Immigration Law Center
- New American Economy
- New America Foundation Resilience Force

TRENDSETTERS IN INNOVATION AND SCALABLE MODELS

The pandemic continues to spread, and it is unclear when it will end. All of the local models supported by the Emma Lazarus Campaign illustrate how home-grown programs can be used to aid millions of families and scale up across jurisdictions to create national solutions. A few examples include:

Philadelphia: The Worker Relief Fund and Putting the First Domestic Worker Bill of Rights into Action. The Philadelphia Worker Relief Fund was established on the heels of the city's Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, a campaign won by the National Domestic Workers Alliance-Pennsylvania (NDWA-PA) at the end of 2019. The workers' bill of rights establishes the first portable benefits program for domestic workers in the United States. After the onset of COVID-19, NDWA-PA and National Domestic Workers Alliance Labs collaborated with the City of Philadelphia to disburse direct cash assistance via the Alia platform to 2,161 Philadelphia workers who were excluded from all state and federal financial pandemic relief programs. The fund was administered by 14 community-based organizations (CBOs), and supported by three partners with strong leadership from Mayor Jim Kenney. Leveraging Open Society's \$1 million investment, Mayor Kenney and the fund's advocates, led by NDWA-PA, secured an additional \$750,000 in private funds. With the momentum built during the COVID-19 response, and as it solidifies its partnership with NDWA in advancing portable benefits for a wider catchment of workers in precarious employment, the City of Philadelphia will also explore a new rental assistance program, and a state-wide pilot for universal basic income.

Denver: The Left Behind Workers Fund and Colorado's Movement Towards Unemployment Insurance for All. The Left Behind Workers Fund, created in Denver with the courageous championing of local council members, such as Robin Kniech, provided cash assistance to 1,950 Denver workers and their families. The fund quickly expanded to other parts of Colorado such as Boulder and Adams County. Open Society's original investment of \$400,000 has now surpassed \$11 million. In parallel to cash assistance, the state of Colorado agreed to commit \$3 million of CARES Act dollars for rental assistance for persons who have been impacted by COVID-19 and/or unemployed as of March 2020. In an extraordinary session of the state legislature in early December, Colorado allocated another \$5 million of its federal funds to provide emergency financial assistance to excluded workers. Because of the fund and related assistance, a growing movement across Colorado has provided further impetus for a statewide movement towards unemployment insurance for all, critical to a state where 7 out of 10 undocumented workers contribute to entitlement systems. If the law changes to expand these entitlements, Colorado will be the first state in the United States to establish an unemployment insurance program open to all, regardless of immigration status. Impact Charitable, a Colorado-based donor advised fund focused on social impact, working with over 30 CBOs across the state, is helping to lead this effort.

New Orleans: Linking Direct Relief to Quality Jobs in Resilient Response. A previous relationship between the City of New Orleans and Resilience Force—a national organization that works to transform America’s response to disasters by strengthening and securing a permanent American resilience workforce—distinguished itself from the other Emma Lazarus Campaign supported projects. Their collaboration leveraged the support from Open Society to address the structural barriers to pandemic relief facing undocumented New Orleans residents. Partnering with the Mayor’s Forward Together New Orleans Fund and local immigrant organizations, they provided direct financial relief to impacted, undocumented workers and families who were ineligible for other federal funding. They also used Emma Lazarus funding for an innovative job-training program, the New Orleans Resilience Corps, which offers quality jobs in the public health and disaster response sector. Resilience Corps creates a special team of first responders who will ensure that all immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, in New Orleans have access to COVID-19 care and community resources. It was an intentional decision not to default solely to cash assistance, but to focus on a structural solution to unemployment in the hospitality industry and focus on job creation and pipelines into sustainable, higher-wage jobs. The City of New Orleans, as is the case for many other cities, could have a year-round work force that performs public health work and is then ready, trained, and able to deploy during a health pandemic or climate disaster. The immigrant-focused team will ensure that the Resilience Corps has deep connections to the communities most impacted and hard to reach.

Nevada’s Esperanza Fund and the Rise of New Immigrant Leaders in the United States. The Emma Lazarus Campaign became the impetus for the Nevada Governor’s Office for New Americans (ONA) to establish The Esperanza Fund, which is housed at the Nevada Community Foundation to provide direct cash assistance to undocumented immigrants in the context of the pandemic, while establishing a permanent vehicle and set of partnerships in the state to support immigrant communities in the future. ONA partnered with the Nevada Immigrant Coalition, and 12 of its CBO members with a deep history and track record of working with diverse immigrant communities across the state. The fund was designed to move dollars quickly while being durable and prepared to function well into the future to meet other anticipated needs of immigrants. These communities have long needed a vehicle to house and disperse dollars particularly in moments of crisis. The Esperanza Fund demonstrates the importance of including people directly impacted by the issues in key decision-making positions in civil society, philanthropy, and government for strategic outcomes and impact. The leaders of Dream Big Nevada and PLAN—two of the CBOs that shaped the fund—the Director of ONA, staff in the governor’s office, and key champions within the Nevada Community Foundation are all immigrants. Many of them have been undocumented or have family who are. Their understanding of the needs of their community, how to best reach that community, and their relationships to organizations that are ensuring policy and systemic responses to supporting immigrant workers have been fundamental in orienting the fund’s vision, structure, strategy, and success.

Harris County: COVID-19 Relief Fund's Unprecedented Commitment of Public Funds For

Unrestricted Cash Assistance. Local elected officials in Houston, County Judge Lina Hidalgo, and County Commissioner Rodney Ellis spearheaded the Harris County Fund, one of the most ambitious and equitable cash assistance programs in the country, investing an unprecedented \$90 million in public funds for cash assistance. The fund was intentionally designed to remove all barriers to access in order to ensure that undocumented immigrants and frontline workers benefitted. Building upon Hurricane Harvey relief work, Harris County solidified sustainable response infrastructure, learning from previous disasters to move swiftly in partnership with the Greater Houston Community Foundation, 83 community-based organizations, and Connective to move money fast to those most in need. Connective is a disaster recovery and preparedness system that helps coordinate human-centered programs in partnership with key stakeholders through centralized intake and application processes, technology-enabled coordination tools, and streamlined data analysis. Knowing funding would not reach everyone in need (over 500,000 people applied) the county is now partnering with Connective and leading organizing groups FIEL, the Houston Organizing for Movement Equity Coalition, the Workers Defense Project, and Unemployed Workers United to build an innovative strategy to engage cash assistance applicants in long-term advocacy for structural solutions.

Atlanta: Creation of a Transformative Cash Assistance Program Led by Community Navigators in

the South. In Atlanta, Open Society's \$750,000 grant helped meet the immediate food security and rental assistance needs of 1,000 immigrant families in metro Atlanta where 14 percent of the city's 6 million residents are immigrants. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Ser Familia, Los Vecinos, the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, and the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta mobilized over the summer to act before the statewide eviction moratorium was lifted in September. This partnership also provided food to children affected by the closing of summer school programs due to COVID-19. In parallel, greater public attention by way of these efforts raised the visibility of this issue in the Atlanta City Council. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs advocated to ensure that immigrant status verification was not part of the application process for rental assistance in the City of Atlanta, thereby allowing undocumented residents the opportunity to participate in the program. This advocacy led to a historic turn of events in which a previous municipal decision was overturned so that \$22 million of COVID relief dollars earmarked for rental assistance became available to undocumented immigrants and their families. The 2020 presidential election reinforced the critical importance of building inclusionary voter engagement strategies and investing in leaders of voting rights organizations across the country and in the South in particular. With these elections as a backdrop, the City of Atlanta—along with an energized philanthropic community led by CFGA and others—have plans to focus on opportunities to connect racial justice and public safety policy reform with immigrant protections, especially for undocumented populations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Private philanthropy cannot substitute for the role of government.** Private investments can move quickly and are catalytic in shoring up and leveraging additional dollars in times of crisis. However, particularly when facing the magnitude of a global pandemic, the limitations of philanthropy are woefully apparent in terms of managing service delivery systems and other forms of direct assistance at scale. Government must step up if interventions are to match the scale of need.
- 2 Best practices for cash assistance models.** Cash assistance models must prioritize accessibility, transparency, and efficiency in their rollout. They must also ensure strategic communications with the local community and with partners to mitigate against a lack of clarity and uncertainty at these times of crisis.
- 3 Crises provide opportunities for structural reforms. A crisis can often expose reforms that were desperately needed even before the crisis hit.** We have shared responsibility to convert the energy and goodwill generated in crisis to work beyond direct relief and address the root causes of our country's biggest problems like skyrocketing housing costs, health care access, poverty wage jobs, and immigration policy.
- 4 The localities that were most equipped to rise to the challenge relied on certain core elements and became models of progressive governance.** These core elements were made up of elected champions with political will, high performing administration staff ("the bureaucratic samurais"), local cohorts of CBOs' with deep roots, a local philanthropic and/or fiscal partner, oftentimes a Community Foundation or Mayor's Fund, and a willingness to work with national experts to augment their knowledge and capacity.
- 5 Coordination can help manage a proliferation of emergency relief funds.** Significant increases in funds from one locality (city to county to state) to another can materialize with the right mix of key stakeholders, elected officials who share similar values, and community based advocates demanding resources from philanthropy and local government. Philanthropy has a role to play in creating the conditions that make it more probable and possible for successful models to more easily expand and to scale from a city level, to multi-city, to state level through policy formulation and institutionalization of inclusive policy-making.

CHARTING A POST-COVID FUTURE

Federal administrative rules and legislation predating the Trump administration, as well as those enacted in the last four years, require drastic reform as they continue to severely limit access to economic support for millions of undocumented workers, members of mixed-status households, and other excluded workers

(e.g., returning citizens, day laborers and others working in the informal economy). They also tie the hands of local officials responsible for navigating economic fallout in jurisdictions with major immigrant populations. This is a priority agenda for change at every level, but particularly for a new federal administration inheriting a prolonged economic crisis. The nation's public health and economic recovery depend on ensuring that everyone has access to care and support.

In this vein, the Emma Lazarus Campaign has revealed the importance of advocacy and action on multiple levels, including:

- Federal and state-level policies that expand the social safety net to undocumented immigrant workers and their families including attention to mixed-status families who are often ineligible for different federal programs.
- Policy changes through federal legislation or administrative action/rule-making to strengthen and expand labor and social protections for excluded workers, including undocumented workers, in the context of growing economic disruptions caused by climate and other types of crises.
- Policy changes at the administrative level to shield undocumented workers from removal, and affirmative relief (deferred action, parole in place) for undocumented and migrant workers — populations disproportionately in “essential” sectors and jobs—who are involved in labor disputes or enforcing their workplace rights, while driving early Congressional action to secure a legislative pathway to legalization.
- Legislative or administrative action to eliminate federal restrictions and exclusions based on immigration status for accessing and allocating federal funds at the local and state levels for flexible, effective, and inclusive responses and economic stabilization/recovery strategies. This includes revocation of the public charge rule, enabling language access, and ensuring data privacy.
- Scaling up local and state level piloting and advocacy to expand existing and innovate new programs to enable greater economic security for undocumented and mixed-status immigrant workers and families during times of economic disruption. This can be done by developing a national model (e.g., parallel unemployment insurance-like programs in Colorado, medical assistance for undocumented seniors in Illinois, portable benefits for domestic and gig workers in Philadelphia, the Resilience Corps based in a New Orleans pilot, and universal basic income and anti-poverty pilots).
- Cultivate partnerships with elected champions at the local level to create a network of cities, counties, and states that value immigrants and workers to advocate more inclusive pro-immigrant and pro-worker rights and public policy (e.g., leverage current ONA infrastructure in key localities, seek guidance on messaging and narrative frames on how to best sell this, and cultivate existing relationships).

- New infrastructure and tools that can improve coordination, communication, and coherence between federal and local governments. These findings support the development of institutions such as a federal office of new Americans that can advise and advocate in real time on how to overcome challenges on the ground.



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