



Project Description

Project Name

RGV Food Bank Contribution

Project Number

ARPA-21-110-022

Department

County Judge's Office

ARPA Expenditure Category

2. Negative Economic Impacts

ARPA Eligibility Category

2.1 Household Assistance: Food Program

Project Description

For the past two years, COVID-19 has greatly impacted the nation, especially regions of low socioeconomic status. Nonprofits, which provide vital services to communities, have faced economic and financial challenges due to the pandemic. Food banks continue to respond to increased demand due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The County desires to designate ARPA funds to assist the RGV Food Bank for additional expenses incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One objective is to provide the citizens of Hidalgo County access to food delivery services including, but not limited to, senior citizens and other vulnerable populations that have been impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Additionally, community factors, such as a debilitated support system, can directly impact and increase a family's likelihood of having food insecurity. Food banks are responding to the rise in food insecurity caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency. The ARPA funds will help support the RGV Food Bank and ensure there is an abundance of resources to meet the growing demand for food assistance.

Community Need Assessment

COVID-19 impacted every part of life, and millions of Americans lost their jobs.¹ As a direct result, food insecurity in Hidalgo County has drastically increased due to the ongoing pandemic and the negative impacts it has left.² Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Supplemental

¹ Department of the Treasury. (n.d.). Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds pg. 2

² Vice president Harris, rep. Lawson discuss food insecurity, vaccinations and American rescue plan during Jacksonville visit. U.S. Congressman Al Lawson. (2021, March 22). Retrieved November 24, 2021, from



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American Rescue Plan Act 2021

Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment in the U.S. was at 36.8 million in February of 2020. By April 2020, enrollments increased to 40 million.

The rate increased again in September of 2020 to 43 million individuals enrolled in SNAP services. The rise in enrollments shows a clear indication in the need to address food insecurity. As of 2020, ³approximately (~220,455) individuals in Hidalgo County are recipients of SNAP benefits. Furthermore, ⁴Hidalgo County has a 78.2% access rate for SNAP benefits. Whereas, statewide access rate is estimated to be 62.8%. Hidalgo County's high access rate for SNAP benefits indicates a large, struggling indigent population. Poverty-stricken communities in Hidalgo County are at heightened risk of experiencing the negative effects of the pandemic to a worse degree. Furthermore, indigent communities in Hidalgo County also disproportionately suffer from health issues, primarily high blood pressure and diabetes. The large amount of compounding negative factors calls for intervention amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impoverished minority communities are heavily impacted by rise in food insecurity.⁵ In Hidalgo County, most of the food shortages are in the Colonias, which are usually located within 150 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. The Colonias consist of individuals and families of low socioeconomic status. Moreover, 82.5% of individuals being identified as food insecure based on hunger vital signs. Many individuals associate this with low access to fresh produce and vegetables. ⁶ Overall, 18% (~153,810) of the Hidalgo County residential area faced food insecurity before the pandemic. Whereas, a projected census shows 21.7% of Hidalgo County residents face food insecurity in 2021. The Hidalgo County food insecurity rate is 65.1% higher than the national average. Whereas, child food insecurity in Hidalgo County before the pandemic was at 26.4%, but has increased to a projected 32.8% in 2021. One local food assistance organization provides services to 76,079 individuals weekly, and roughly 48,389,101 meals are distributed annually within the Rio Grande Valley.

<https://lawson.house.gov/media/press-releases/vice-president-harris-rep-lawson-discuss-food-insecurity-vaccinations-and-american-rescue-plan-during-jacksonville-visit->

³ *SNAP benefits recipients in Hidalgo County, TX*. FRED. (2020, December 10). Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CBR48215TXA647NCEN>.

⁴ Scherpf, E. (n.d.). *Economic Research Report State and county levels*. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45136/40266_err-156.pdf?v=42642.

⁵ Rosenberg, J., Sudanagunta, S., & Griffin, M. (n.d.). *Survey of Latino/Hispanic adult immigrants living in the colonias of Hidalgo County, Texas evaluating reported food insecurity and immigration-related fear*. DigitalCommons@TMC. Retrieved November 24, 2021, from <https://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/childrenatrisk/vol10/iss1/10/>.

⁶ Feeding America. (n.d): Food Insecurity in Hidalgo County retrieved from: <https://feedingamericaaction.org/resources/state-by-state-resource-the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-food-insecurity/>



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Fiscal Impact
\$100,000