

Background

The Left Behind Workers Fund Cash Assistance program provides direct cash payments of \$1,000 to Colorado workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and overlooked by federal aid programs.


The Left Behind Workers Fund (LBWF) was launched in March 2020 through Impact Charitable, and to date has been supported by private, county, and state funding sources. The Cash Assistance program initially ran from April - December 2020; it re-launched in February 2021 and continues to operate today. LBWF also provides rental assistance; that program is not considered in this report.

Trained screeners at community-based organizations across Colorado work with individuals who are interested in applying to determine eligibility.

There are 41 community-based organizations across Colorado that have partnered with the LBWF. These organizations have a history of providing services in their community and serve as a trusted point of contact for individuals interested in applying.

Between April 2020 and April 2021, the Left Behind Workers Fund distributed cash assistance to 11,105 people residing in 42 counties across Colorado.

This includes 7,588 people who received \$1,000 in cash assistance in 2020, 1,997 people who received \$1,000 in cash assistance in 2021, and 1,520 people who received cash assistance in both 2020 and 2021 (for a total of \$2,000). Recipients ranged in age from 18 to 84 years old, with an average age of 41; 59% identified as female. There were no major demographic differences between those who received funds in 2020, 2021, or both years.

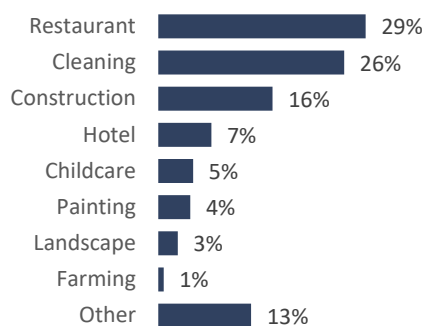
 **The funds reached 16,146 children, including 3,740 children under the age of five.**

The majority (78%) of recipients had children, and among those with children, there was an average (median) of two children in the household.

 **Nearly 4 out of 5 (79%) recipients were originally from Mexico.**

Overall, recipients represented 45 countries of origin.

Most recipients worked in the restaurant, cleaning, and construction industries before losing employment.



In order to be eligible, recipients were working at least 20 hours a week before experiencing complete or partial job loss. On average, recipients had lost 14 hours of work per week before applying.

Evaluation Findings

In May 2021, the OMNI Institute distributed a follow-up survey to 2021 cash assistance recipients who consented to being contacted after they applied; 879 of the 3,114 recipients who received the survey responded (28%), and the demographics of those who responded are largely representative of those who received cash assistance to date. Additionally, OMNI conducted interviews with the leaders of three participating community-based organizations, and Screeners conducted interviews with ten recipients across these three organizations to hear about their experiences with the LBWF in their own words.

Left Behind Workers Fund Cash Assistance Impact Snapshot

May/June 2021

The pandemic introduced uncertainty, fear, and significant long-term impacts to employment for recipients.

Some recipients described having little saved up and carrying debt even prior to the pandemic, but that COVID intensified worries about making ends meet, becoming homeless, and other concerning impacts. Recipients described reduced work hours, and for those in certain industries, reduced demand for services.

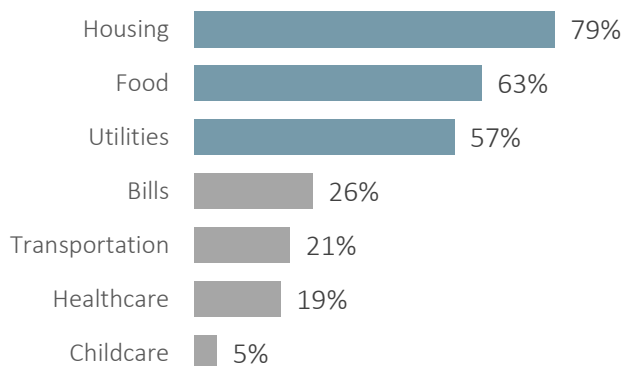
Recipients used the funds to meet short-term basic needs and stabilize their current circumstances.



Most recipients (87%) used the funds to cover on-going expenses. Fewer used the funds to pay down debt (36%), contribute to savings (2%), or make a large one-time purchase (<1%).

Recipients most commonly used the funds to pay for housing, food, and utilities.

Other common uses included paying bills, transportation, and healthcare costs.



Due to the ... coronavirus, I was looking more than anything for help with rent, food, and some bills.

Cash Assistance Recipient



65% of recipients indicated that the funds helped them **keep their housing**.



58% indicated that the funds helped ensure their family had **enough to eat**.



31% indicated that the funds **prevented them from going into debt** (or into greater debt).

Recipients used the funds to support themselves and others, spreading the economic benefits into their families and communities.



On average, recipients **used the funds to support three other people**.

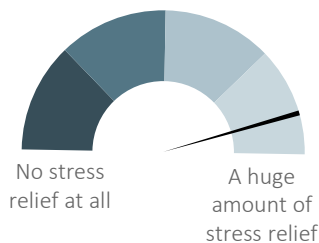
The unrestricted nature of the funds allowed recipients to direct the resources where they were needed most.

For example, recipients were able to direct their grocery spending toward foods that are culturally relevant versus being relegated to what is available through food pantries. Recipients also shared about their mounting anxieties over being able to pay for different types of costs that were accumulating, and the relief experienced in being able to immediately and directly address these costs themselves through the funds.

Left Behind Workers Fund Cash Assistance Impact Snapshot

May/June 2021

Recipients' well-being benefited as a result of receiving cash assistance.



69% of recipients felt a huge amount of stress relief after receiving the funds.

48% of recipients said that one of the greatest impacts of receiving the funds was that it helped them worry less.

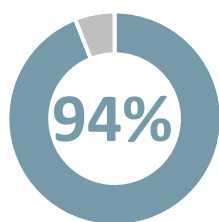


It is not just the \$1000, but the relief, the breath you can take now, feeling that maybe now you won't have to struggle to pay the electricity bills. The relief was the biggest thing I am thankful for.

Cash Assistance Recipient

Though many recipients were initially wary, experiences with the Left Behind Workers Fund built trust and deepened connections between recipients and community-based organizations.

Both recipients and CBO leaders described that many individuals and families are reluctant to seek out or accept aid, and that this reluctance in part reflects an understandable lack of trust in institutions. Perceiving LBWF as 'too good to be true,' some recipients reported initial hesitancy towards applying to the program and were skeptical that there no strings attached. Screeners played a critical role in assuaging fears and ensuring the legitimacy of the fund, and were seen as credible given their connection to their communities.



94% of recipients were more comfortable seeking assistance from community organizations after receiving the funds.

LBWF gave us a higher sense of credibility in the community [and has been] an amazing tool for that outreach.

Community Based Organization Leader

The pandemic may seem over for some, but for LBWF recipients the need continues.

Direct cash assistance helped recipients endure some of the most stressful and uncertain stages of the pandemic, particularly at its start. Recipients described that the relief helped to absorb some of the shockwaves the pandemic created and provided hope. However, recipients called attention to the fact that the pandemic is not over, and their lives have not returned "back to normal." People are still experiencing reduced hours, unstable employment, and a resurgence of bills piling up; many recipients remain in a similar situation as when the pandemic first began.

At the time of the follow-up survey (May 2021)...

20% of recipients remained completely out of work

68% of recipients were working fewer hours