



WORKING TOGETHER

TRABAJANDO JUNTOS



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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The year 2020 brought multiple challenges to our country and to the world—COVID-19, the Census 2000 count, the presidential election and in Georgia, the runoff in 2021. The year also brought particular challenges to vulnerable Latinx individuals and families in Georgia and the nonprofits that serve them.

In March 2020, Georgia imposed a shutdown on the state in order to stem the spread of COVID-19. The Latino Community Fund of Georgia (LCF Georgia) quickly launched a fundraising effort dedicated to support vulnerable individuals and families: undocumented individuals, mixed status families, essential workers and others directly and overwhelmingly affected by COVID-19, yet intentionally excluded from relief by federal and state governments. An initial group of 4 organizations--Dignidad Inmigrante, Ser Familia, Coalición de Líderes Latinos, and Los Vecinos de Buford Highway—mobilized to make recommendations for distribution guidelines, which received the collective buy-in of the other organizations, groups and faith leaders who would lead the work. In turn, LCF Georgia regranted these dollars to member organizations so they could provide the assistance to Latinx Georgians in need.

This study examines how a group of LCF Georgia member organizations fared both on their own and as a coalition to respond to the needs of vulnerable Latinx Georgians in the wake of the shutdown and economic disruption. The study documents how these organizations worked together, and it also documents how they provided assistance to each other in supporting their efforts.

Project Design

The study design included research on LCF Georgia and 14 coalition member organizations throughout the state, in addition to one-on-one interviews with the directors. The organizations selected had both led COVID-19 financial relief and concurrently took part in promoting participation in the 2020 census. Participating organizations were:

Caminar Latino-LUPE
Coalición de Líderes Latinos
Dignidad Inmigrante en Athens
El Refugio
Latin American Chamber of Commerce
LCF Georgia
Lifting Latinx Voices
Los Vecinos de Buford Highway

Los Niños Primero
Sandy Springs Mission
Scorzza Arts
Ser Familia
Savannah Undocumented Youth Alliance/MESE
Unidos Latino Association
U-Lead Athens



Key Findings: Adaptations, Achievements and Learnings

Directors from the membership organizations as well as the executive director of LCF Georgia provided insight into how they dealt with the sudden shutdown, the increased community needs, the needs of the membership organizations themselves, what they learned, and what they ultimately accomplished. Agency directors reported that they:

- pivoted from the regular way they provide services;
- had to find ways to cope with additional challenges;
- received needed financial and technical support;
- collaborated with each other; and
- leveraged resources.



PHOTO CREDIT: LIFTING LATINX VOICES



PHOTO CREDIT: SER FAMILIA



PHOTO CREDIT: EL REFFUGIO

As a collaboration, LCF Georgia and the member organizations were able to multiply the outcomes that any one organization could achieve. As a collaboration, organizations achieved the following:

- 152,000 families received at least one box of culturally appropriate food for one week for 5 people.
- Over 14,000 families received rental assistance.
- Over 30,000 poultry plant workers, carpet manufacturers and agricultural workers and other essential workers received PPE.
- 8,200 families received diapers.
- 4,541 COVID tests were administered.
- More than 15,000 COVID-19 vaccines were given (as of August 2021).
- The State of Georgia began offering its COVID health line in multiple languages.
- 93% of the organizations experienced no revenue losses, and 86% experienced revenue increases.
- 93% of the organizations reported increased collaboration and consequently, increased outcomes.

The pandemic brought challenges and opportunities to each organization and to the collaboration in general, resulting in some key shared learnings. At the organizational level:

- All organizations reported that their staff and agencies learned they are capable of more than they imagined.
- All bring a deeper understanding of the experience and importance of working collaboratively.
- Each director expressed concern about going back to “normal” since “normal” for the Latinx population means a return to the conditions which create the disparities that were made evident by the pandemic.
- The experience of working through the disruption of the pandemic underscored the importance of importance of constantly reviewing missions, activities, needs, assumptions and opportunities rather than doing business as usual.
- Although at times weary, all remain hopeful for the future and remain focused on the overwhelming work that needs to be done to achieve equity for Georgia’s Latinx community.

In addition, leaders of the participating organizations reported that they learned how to successfully confront some of the common barriers to successful collaboration, citing the following strategies:

- **Leaders need to trust each other:** Trust at the interpersonal and inter-organizational levels is the basis of a strong collaboration. In order for trust to happen, communication needs to be open so that all partners know the strengths and constraints of each partner.
- **Everyone needs to benefit and everyone needs to be valued:** All organizations, regardless of their size or age, learned that they have valuable assets they can bring to the table, financial or otherwise.
- **Rather than be competitive, partner organizations can lift each other up:** Nonprofit directors remarked on the importance of helping the other organizations increase their capacity to provide services and be sustainable, and that benefits the population they collectively serve.
- **Collaborations work best when goals are defined:** Collaborations are most effective when there is a clear purpose that everyone can get behind and be inspired by.
- **Good facilitation and coordination is critical.** Collaborations are most effective with coordination that is supportive, forward-thinking, and connective. This can be achieved in different ways, from hiring an experienced facilitator who serves as a neutral party to working under the umbrella of another organization.



PHOTO CREDIT: SPRING MISSION

Working Together/Trabajando Juntos: What Can Be Learned from a Coalition of Georgia Latinx-serving Organizations in 2020

Introduction

Nonprofit organizations play a critical role in improving the quality of life at the community, local, state, national, and even global levels. However, nonprofits face numerous challenges in striving to carry out their missions, including balancing a growing need for services with limited financial, human and other resources. Over the last decade, foundation and government funding sources have encouraged and in some cases required funded organizations to collaborate with other agencies through coalition building in an effort to avoid duplication of services by working together. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdown, which resulted in sudden income loss as well as healthcare needs among so many individuals and families, illuminated the need for collaboration as an effective strategy to fill gaps, reduce costs, and expand services.

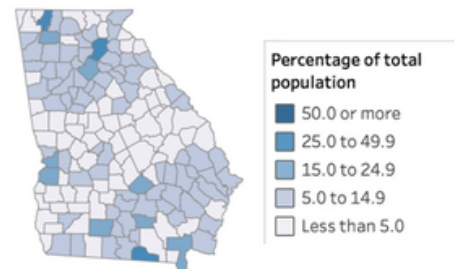
Collaborations don't just happen on their own. They need to be planned, implemented and managed, and typically this involves developing and implementing a shared agenda, coordinating group efforts, providing mutual support, and sharing information and resources to strengthen each coalition member's work! With limited resources, many nonprofits do not have the resources available for the coordination of these efforts.

Latinos in Georgia

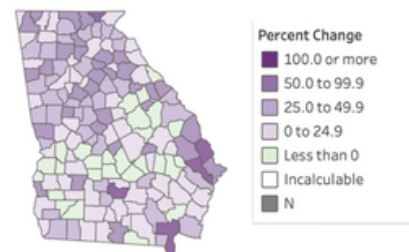
According to the 2020 Census, Georgia's Latinx population has reached 1.1 million and now represents 10.6% of the total residents. This represents a 31% increase from 2010.² Much of the dramatic growth has occurred in the 29-county metropolitan statistical Atlanta area, with an overall 33% increase and resulting in approximately 730,000 Latinx residents.³ However, many counties outside the metro Atlanta area have also experienced dramatic growth, with 370,000 Latinx Georgians throughout the rest of the state.

Although many Latinx Georgians have made great strides in measures of financial success, 19.7% still live in poverty based on US Census standards⁴ and 46% are uninsured.⁵ Though there are few statistics on Latinx immigration status, as of 2018, the state's undocumented immigrant population was estimated at roughly 380,000 according to the Department of Homeland Security.⁶

Percent Hispanic or Latino
by County: 2020
Georgia: 10.5%



Percent Change Hispanic or Latino Population
by County: 2010 to 2020
Georgia: 31.6%



1. https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/sites/default/files/documents/07_coalitions.pdf

2. <https://www.ajc.com/news/2020-census-georgias-minority-populations-have-surged/SLZIWHRNE5CMDJR2EDMRD42ZDY/>

3. <https://www.metroatlantachamber.com/resources/reports-and-information/executive-profile>

4. <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/poverty-rate-by-raceethnicity/>

currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D

5. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2021/jun/racial-ethnic-inequities-health-care-coverage-access-2013-2019>

6. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigrationstatistics/Pop_Estimate/UnauthImmigrant/unauthorized_immigrant_population_estimates_2015_-_2018.pdf

History of Latino Serving Organizations in Georgia

Georgia is now home to a wide variety of Latinx-serving organizations throughout the state. This group of nonprofits which can be categorized as either large anchor institutions, established midsized agencies or small startup groups serving niche audiences. Until the mid 1990s, most of Georgia's Latinx population was centered in what were at that time the core metro Atlanta counties: Fulton, DeKalb, Cobb, Gwinnett, and Clayton. To serve this population, the Latin American Association was founded in 1972 and has since grown to be the oldest and largest Latinx serving organization in the state. With all of the employment opportunities associated with the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, the metro Latinx population grew dramatically and more Latinx-serving organizations were founded to provide support to the growing population, and today many of the then grassroots Latinx-servicing organizations have evolved into well established nonprofits today. However, because Latinx Georgians are now all over the state, many younger, smaller, and often grassroots nonprofits have emerged to accommodate the growing Latinx populations outside the metro Atlanta area. These younger and more geographically scattered nonprofits often struggle to make their organizations visible, to coordinate with similar agencies, and to gain access to funding and other resources that the larger, more established agencies are positioned to receive.

Citing the need to bring together and support Georgia's Latinx-serving organizations large and small, Latino Community Fund (LCF Georgia) was founded in 2017 to raise their collective voices and visibility, encourage collaboration, support their sustainability, and connect them to needed resources. Today, LCF Georgia is made up of more than 40 member organizations representative of the diversity of the Latinx community.

This Study: Background, Rationale and Structure

The year 2020 brought multiple challenges to our country and to the world. It also brought particular challenges to vulnerable Latinx individuals and families in Georgia and the nonprofits that serve them. Although the COVID-19 pandemic comes to mind as the principal challenge, the year also included the Census 2000 count as well as organizing around the presidential election and the runoff election in early 2021.

With three years of history under its belt in 2020, the Latino Community Fund of Georgia found itself in a position it never could have planned for. The organization was founded to help support the efforts of the range of Georgia's Latinx-serving nonprofits and to increase Latinx mobilization in civic life. In 2020, LCF Georgia evolved to support member organizations in their efforts to respond to the deep and broad community need for food, living expenses, education, healthcare, and others and to expand the range of direct services forced by the vast needs the pandemic created.

In March 2020, Georgia imposed a shutdown on the state in order to stem the spread of COVID-19. LCF Georgia quickly launched a fundraising drive dedicated to support vulnerable Latinx individuals and families, including undocumented individuals, mixed status families, essential workers and others directly and overwhelmingly affected by COVID-19, yet intentionally excluded from relief by federal and state governments.

An initial group of 4 organizations--Dignidad Inmigrante, Ser Familia, Coalición de Líderes Latinos, and Los Vecinos de Buford Highway--mobilized to make recommendations for distribution guidelines, which received the collective buy-in of the other organizations, groups and faith leaders who would lead the work. In turn, LCF Georgia regranted these dollars to member organizations so they could provide the assistance to Latinx Georgians in need.

This study examines how a group of LCF Georgia member organizations fared both on their own and as a coalition to respond to the needs of vulnerable Latinx Georgians in the wake of the shutdown and economic disruption. The study documents how these organizations worked together, and it also documents how they provided assistance to each other in supporting their efforts. Research questions included the following:

- How did member organizations pivot in 2020 to both provide services differently and respond to the needs of their target populations?
- What were the different modes of collaboration among LCF Georgia member organizations?
- What types of collaboration are most successful both in service provision and in establishing sustainable structures of collaboration?
- What is the role of trust, power, and resource development in developing inter-organizational collaborations?
- What is the role of a coordinating organization like LCF Georgia in developing and sustaining successful collaborations?
- What lessons were learned from 2020?

The study design involved research on LCF Georgia and 14 coalition member organizations throughout the state. One-on-one interviews were conducted with the directors.

Each of the participating organizations took on COVID-19 financial relief and also participated in 2020 Census promotion. All organizations members are nonprofits, and all but the Savannah Undocumented Youth Alliance, Dignidad Inmigrante and Latin American Chamber of Commerce had their full 501(c)(3) status. Given that many of the member organizations have financial and time constraints, LCF Georgia provided mini-grants of \$2,500 to enable them to participate in a capacity building project, which included various trainings as well as participating in an interview process to reflect on the challenges, opportunities, learnings and barriers for community organizations that worked on the front lines with diverse community members. Participating organizations⁷ were:

Caminar Latino-LUPE • Coalición de Líderes Latinos (CLILA) • Dignidad Inmigrante en Athens (DIA) • El Refugio • Latin American Chamber of Commerce (LACC Georgia) • Latino Community Fund (LCF Georgia) • Lifting Latinx Voices • Los Niños Primero • Los Vecinos de Buford Highway • Sandy Springs Mission • Scorzza Arts • Ser Familia • Savannah Undocumented Youth Alliance/MESE • Unidos Latino Association • U-Lead Athens

7. See Appendix for information on participating organizations.



Interview questions included:

- What is the brief history of your organization, including its present scope (staff size, budget, funding sources, programs, geographic target area)?
- How would you define the community you serve? Did this community change in 2020?
- How was your organization affected by the events of 2020?
- What were some of the risks your organization faced and how did you deal with them?
- Who did you collaborate with?
- What resources were you able to offer other organizations? What resources did other organizations offer you?
- What were the positive and negative aspects of collaborating?
- What role did LCF Georgia play in facilitating the collaboration?
- Did you have a history of collaboration prior to 2020?
- How did 2020 affect you and your team?
- What did you learn from 2020? What will you take forward?

A Brief Review of Collaboration Best Practices

Most research and practice in nonprofit management and program development support the idea that working in collaboration yields rewards yet also presents challenges. A brief review of best practices provides a lens through which to view the collaboration convened by LCF Georgia.

Collaboration can take many forms, including cooperation, joint programming, affiliations, shared services and resources, and legal mergers. Nonprofits can partner with other nonprofits, but also for-profit businesses, academic institutions, and government entities. While each type of collaboration brings its unique set of advantages and challenges, common benefits that are often cited include:

- maximizing cost savings
- addressing complex issues that require coordinating multiple stakeholders
- improved efficiency
- less duplication of services
- increased leverage, visibility and credibility.⁸

With all these benefits, collaboration has become a buzzword in the nonprofit industry. However, in “Collaboration and Collective Impact,”⁹ the author posits that while authentic collaborations are valuable, often partnerships are hastily formed to comply with funder requirements and more about convenience than substance. The author suggests that collaboration is most effective when it is rooted in outcomes or collective impact. “Through a collective impact approach,” the article states, “stakeholders identify intersecting interests related to the problem, hammer out a common agenda, agree on shared evaluation measures, and work to ensure that the activities of all involved groups are mutually reinforcing and contribute towards the desired outcomes...[Collective impact] moves beyond linked silos into allied and aligned action.”¹⁰

8. <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/thought-leadership/5-tips-nonprofit-collaborationsassistance>

9. <https://www.thenonprofittimes.com/grant/collaboration-and-collective-impact/#>

10. Ibid.

Nonprofit collaboration is not as easy as it sounds. It takes coordination and management, and there are many associated barriers, risks and fears including:

- A lack of respect and trust
- Different mindsets
- A lack of alignment around goals
- Lack of follow through
- Time constraints
- Negative staff reactions
- Loss of control
- Mission drift
- Competition for funding
- Communication
- Lack of funding for collaboration coordination and management¹¹

Commonly cited success factors include:

- A shared vision
- Trust
- Clearly stated needs and responsibilities
- Ongoing communication¹²

In Their Words: Impact of Covid-19

In January 2020, LCF member organizations were already planning for a busy year of advocacy and organizing with the Census 2000 count and the presidential election on the horizon. In March, these Latinx-serving organizations, like the rest of the country, were dealt a new hand as state and local governments imposed lockdowns to stop the spread of COVID-19. Vulnerable Latinx Georgians suffered significant economic hardships and health impacts, particularly those with no access to government benefits, and social service organizations saw a huge uptick in requests for assistance. Nonprofits were faced with difficult decisions on how to operate or whether to operate at all. Large, established organizations with solid funding relationships and financial reserves were more likely to be able to pivot, but smaller, younger and grassroots organizations, particularly those with non social service missions, worried about staying afloat.

Federal government loans, forgivable if certain conditions were met, were available for nonprofit and for-profit businesses. State and local governments made emergency assistance dollars available for distribution by nonprofits to individuals who met the proscribed qualifications. Many foundations quickly modified their priorities to provide additional support to nonprofits to distribute for emergency assistance and to fund their own operations.

Directors from the membership organizations as well as the executive director of LCF Georgia provided insight into how they dealt with the sudden shutdown, the increased community needs, the needs of the membership organizations themselves, what they learned, and what they ultimately accomplished. They reflected on how they pivoted from the regular way they provide services, coped with additional challenges, received needed financial and technical support, collaborated, and leveraged resources.

11. https://www.bridgespan.org/bridgespan/Images/articles/making-sense-of-nonprofit-collaborations/MakingSenseOfNonprofitCollaborations_1.pdf

12. <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/thought-leadership/5-tips-nonprofit-collaborations>

Directors also voiced some of the learnings around moving forward both as individual organizations and as collaborators, and it examines the role of an organization like LCF Georgia as a facilitator of the collaboration.

Pivots

Generally, mission drift in nonprofits is considered a negative because it represents a shift from the organization's purpose. However, during the pandemic, staff and board of the participating organizations had to make decisions on whether and how to temporarily flex their missions and values in order to respond to the crisis. All of the nonprofits studied had to pivot in ways small and large to find new ways of offering services. In their words:

"We had to close in March and we reopened in May. We wrestled with how to start classes in a way that was COVID safe. We spent a lot of time cleaning, but we had very few students. We tried virtual classes but gradually went back to in-person classes with smaller groups and modified spaces with separation." Judith Scorzza, Scorzza Academy

"In spite of the cascade of emergency assistance dollars that seemed to be flowing, a clear lack of preparation and understanding that most government offices and large and established nonprofits had of the Latinx and immigrant population created barriers for getting the dollars to vulnerable communities. Efforts were designed to be efficient for the organizations that would deliver support. However, the framework was not equitable or accessible for many in the Latinx community: Those with transportation and mobility challenges, those that did not speak English well, undocumented individuals, mixed status families, those affected directly by the virus and those working in shifts and frontline occupations. We quickly amped up our advocacy efforts with funders and government agencies to fight for inclusion of our people." -Gigi Pedraza, LCF Georgia

"Lifting Latinx Voices is the only program in Georgia that provides sexual health educational workshops in Spanish. The pandemic presented a challenge since we don't manage ongoing cases. Families that we helped before suddenly started reaching out to us because they lost their jobs, were struggling, and needed assistance. We started with food distribution, and when they opened up COVID testing, we started doing that. And then when the vaccines were available, we started doing that, too." -Johanna Caicedo, Lifting Latinx Voices

"We work with a lot of small businesses. When the pandemic hit, all of our plans for 2020 went out the window. All of a sudden, everything we did was related to the pandemic...In the beginning, there was a lot of uncertainty. The first thing that many small businesses did when they had to close their doors was fire people. Then all of these programs started coming out, so we started learning about and providing information about them: SBA loans, PPP loans, and others. We paid rent for a few businesses, and we used our members' and our relationships to help find food for distribution. Every week there was something new." -Alejandro Coss, Latin American Chamber of Commerce

"We asked our board to step out of our mission temporarily to redirect some of our funding to help stabilize families. We added food pantries in all of our offices. We also saw a 112% uptick in domestic violence cases as well as an increase in child sexual abuse cases. We did not expect that." -Belisa Urbina, Ser Familia

"We are a nonprofit whose mission is to create spaces for liberation and empowerment. We don't have a pyramidal structure and we are based in people power and consensus. We intentionally rejected the charity model. However, during the pandemic, we had to temporarily shift our thinking and operate more like a charity. It was hard because these were not our core values, and we had to learn to do more administrative things. Still, we had to do it." -Beto Mendoza, Dignidad Inmigrante de Athens

"El Refugio helps people who are in immigration detention and their families. We have a hospitality house where families visiting their detained loved ones can stay for free. With the pandemic, we were no longer able to visit the detention center and families were not traveling, so we started to think about how we could be present with people. We ramped up our hotline program and started getting calls from people who were detained. We started the commissary and phone support and provided food and other assistance to the families of the detainees. Assistance to the families was critical because it took away some of the concerns of the detainees, who were worried about their families' wellbeing." -Amilcar Valencia, El Refugio

"We're an organization that offers academic support for Latino students, not social services. When things shut down in March, we had to go to our board to be able to redirect some funding to get our families help with bills and food and other essential needs. A lot of organizations that were providing rent and food were already to capacity and they were sending people to us." -Félix Lora, Sandy Springs Mission

"Caminar Latino was founded to help those who are affected by family violence transform their lives. In 2020, we had to shift to a virtual model. Because the survivors had families at home and safe space was an issue, safety planning had to be different. We also made the decision to give substantial financial assistance to abusers because we know that economic stressors in the home are often triggers for domestic violence." -Jessica Nunan, Caminar Latino

"CLILA works in Dalton to foster the civic engagement of Latinos and provide youth homework assistance. When the lockdown happened, we had to stop some of our in-person services but we never closed. Instead, we continued seeing people at the door. We were helping people that we never met before doing things we had never done. We helped with food, rent and utility assistance, COVID testing, assistance to small businesses, and food distribution. We were helping people in the hospital, people whose relatives had died, and businesses that were struggling to stay open." -América Gruner, Coalición de Líderes Latinos



PHOTO CREDIT: COALICIÓN DE LÍDERES LATINOS

"U-Lead exists to help get immigrants and their children into college. We always believed our in-person nature was our strength. When students came in person, they would bring their friends and there was a lot of socializing. With COVID, we saw a definite decrease in students. They got tired of ZOOM. I think that our in-person nature made us more attractive, and we lost that. But hopefully we will get it back."
- Betina Kaplan, U-Lead

Other Challenges

In addition to the changes in service delivery, agencies faced challenges at the organizational and personal levels that they had to contend with. In their words:

"I got COVID, which developed into pneumonia. I was in the hospital for about nine days and it took a while for me to get back. But I was very fortunate that I was able to transition to work from home, and I was also able to keep getting a paycheck. I'm really not one to complain because I know that for so many people, that wasn't an option." -Alejandro Coss, Latin American Chamber of Commerce

"I read that 18% of nonprofits stayed open, and we were one of them. Staying open was daunting—staff needed to know they were safe, and they were overwhelmed. This was very hard especially in light of the fact that so many others were at home and able to stay socially distant. We were concerned about the mental health needs of our staff." -Belisa Urbina, Ser Familia

"Our staff experienced burnout. Nobody would take a day off." -Día Parker, Vecinos de Buford Highway

"We went into the community door-to-door to get people help. Staff was overwhelmed and tired. They were canvassing neighborhoods in the hot Georgia summer sun, distributing food boxes in the elements, providing funeral assistance, and dealing with the frustration of knowing that they were working hard while others were furloughed." -América Gruner, Coalición de Líderes Latinos

"We were also dealing with our own personal and family issues. My colleague, Rebeca, got COVID. My mom died in the middle of everything, and I also lost an aunt to COVID. I dealt with my stress by focusing on serving." -Delicia Idlett, Unidos Latino Association

Support Received

With a robust and successful fundraising history, LCF Georgia quickly mobilized to secure emergency assistance dollars to be regranting to the members for distribution. Additionally, busy and overwhelmed organizations also received additional critically needed support in terms of information, training, and technical assistance. In their words:

"We are an all-volunteer organization that had never raised money before. We didn't even have our 501(c)(3). When the lockdown happened and people needed help, I was like, what do I do? Who do I contact? That's when I decided to reach out to LCF Georgia. I asked about getting some emergency assistance money, and I was told I would need a fiscal agent to be able to be granted the funds.



Thankfully I was able to find one. LCF Georgia initially granted us \$2,500, and then \$5,000, and then \$20,000 for emergency assistance. LCF also helped us vaccinate 500 people. With guidance we received from LCF, we did get our 501(c)(3) in 2021. Yeah, we're really excited. It has been a lot of work.” -Daniela Rodríguez, Savannah Undocumented Youth Alliance/MESE

“It’s very important to mention that LCF Georgia is looking for resources for us. As a result, we were able to collaborate on big initiatives that they established for the census and now for redistricting. I think it’s very important for us to let our students know that these issues exist and

that they participate in these activities. And this is something that we could never do on our own because we don't have the time. -Betina Kaplan, U-Lead

“Before the pandemic, we were relatively inexperienced as we were a pretty young organization with a \$50,000 budget. With the funding we were able to receive, we gained 5 staff members and now had to manage \$500,000, which we didn’t know how to do. LCF Georgia helped us think through all these changes and transform from a grassroots organization.” -Día Parker, Vecinos de Buford Highway

“LCF Georgia listened. As a result, they helped keep us current on what was happening, conducted group information sessions with doctors and public health experts on COVID safety, offered workshops on how to financially sustain our organizations, and connected us to funding opportunities, research we didn’t have time for. And bringing everybody together has been great... They take away some of the deep back office stuff, which frees us up to do the work.” -Alejandro Coss, Latin American Chamber of Commerce

“We were getting a whole lot of calls during that time from people who lost jobs, needed food, and were behind in rent, and we didn't have that kind of money. LCF Georgia sent an email to members in regards to a grant opportunity for COVID relief, so we went ahead and applied, and based on that, 1,200 families received food assistance and 47 families got rent assistance. We were able to provide 3,400 people with PPE and cleaning supplies. Sadly, we had to help 16 families with funeral assistance, too.” -Rebeca Gibbons, Unidos Latino Association

“My expertise is in social work, not social services, so we had no idea how to give out emergency assistance. LCF Georgia worked with us to create an application for clients as well as all the administrative controls to manage this process.” -Delicia Idlett, Unidos Latino Association

Collaborating

When the pandemic hit, LCF Georgia and its members found they needed to collaborate in new ways to serve the community and for their own survival. In their words:

“We collaborated with Sandy Springs Mission, Ser Familia, and other organizations in the city. We provided bilingual staff to organizations that didn’t have the capacity to serve the Latino population. We also worked together to find ways to offer services...Yes, there are challenges to collaboration like territorialism and obstacles put up by organizations, but I feel like it’s short sighted for organizations to try to do everything alone. If we really have the vision to help the community, working together creates a ripple effect.” -Maritza Morelli, Los Niños Primero

“Sometimes referrals weren’t going through especially because a lot of people were working from home. Most of the phone numbers I had didn’t matter because nobody was in their offices. Even emails weren’t always getting answered. I think that was one of the biggest struggles that we had. And that’s better with our collaboration because we know each other and we’re accountable.” -Naomi Desta, Lifting Latinx Voices

“We’re an arts organization, so we normally don’t need to collaborate closely with social service organizations. But the pandemic and the needs of our families changed that. So many of our families were struggling and under stress, so we collaborated with Ser Familia for mental health referrals.” -Judith Scorzza, Scorzza Academy

“Ours is a larger, more established nonprofit but we relied on the grassroots organizations as brokers and information sources because they really know the community. Still, sometimes there’s mistrust of the larger organizations. One of the collaborating agencies was concerned that we were going to open an office in their community. We had to work together to provide reassurance that ours would be complimentary services rather than competition” -Belisa Urbina, Ser Familia

“Because we’ve been around for a while, and because so many of the LCF Georgia organizations were thrust into a new role during the pandemic, we were able to help some of them with questions about nonprofit management and administration. We also provided perspective on family violence issues.” -Jessica Nunan, Caminar Latino

“Sometimes it’s hard working with some of the other organizations because we are not in the same location. Still, in 2020 we worked with Dignidad Inmigrante because we were working on a civic engagement campaign here in Savannah and we reached out to them because they had expertise. We also worked with Vecinos de Buford Highway when we were doing the rent assistance program because we were not really sure of how many questions to ask. They helped us with that. And recently GALEO contacted us for help because they want to expand their civic engagement work.” -Daniela Rodríguez, Savannah Undocumented Youth Alliance/MESE

“We had a particularly difficult situation with a man who was in immigration detention and was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. They just opened the doors and

let him out in the middle of central Georgia and in the middle of the lockdown. He had no money, no place to live and couldn't work because he was undocumented and sick. We collaborated with the staff at Ser Familia and had to think outside the box for a solution. Together, we were able to get him a place and utilize our contacts to get him food through Meals on Wheels and medical care through Good Samaritan Health Care Center. Ultimately, we were able to return some dignity to him. -Amilcar Valencia, El Refugio

Leveraging Resources

In normal times, nonprofits must use their resources wisely since funds are not easy to come by. In 2020, organizations had to be even more strategic to bring in resources and leverage those resources to get the most “bang for the buck.” In their words:

“The funding that came from government sources was restricted to one month of assistance. We worked together with other organizations because we had been able to leverage funding from LCF Georgia to raise an additional \$100,000. We were able to combine our resources with other agencies to help families and were able to offer up to 6 months of help.” -Belisa Urbina, Ser Familia

“We were able to leverage the dollars we got from LCF Georgia for emergency assistance to bring in additional dollars. Actually, LCF Georgia taught me how to leverage funding.” -Día Parker, Vecinos de Buford Highway

“With the \$24,000 we got through LCF Georgia, we were able to make a case to ask our supporters to help us raise more funds, and we were able to bring in an additional \$10,000 through this effort.” -Naomi Desta, Lifting Latinx Voices

“The funding we got from LCF Georgia was intentionally earmarked for the undocumented because the funding from the state had the stipulations that applicants had to have a social security number. When families who did have a social security number called, we were able to hit up our partners up and say, “Hey, can you help them with this?” and vice versa if they had undocumented clients so that we could maximize our dollars.” Rebeca Gibbons, Unidos Latino Association

“Because we were representing a collaboration, we were able to secure \$250,000 initially and eventually \$800,000 in regrants for emergency assistance. With that history and impact, we were able to invest over \$2 million dollars in the community for COVID relief, Census work and civic participation. We didn't take money from funders that required too much data collection as we wanted to make the process to distribute aid as simple as possible for our agencies. We also successfully leveraged our collective voice to push the State of Georgia to provide COVID hotline services in other languages, which they did not do initially.” -Gigi Pedraza, LCF Georgia

Coordination

Given that a major barrier to collaboration is funding and management, it is not surprising that many of the member organizations reflected on LCF Georgia's role as coordinator of the collaboration. In their words:

"It was critical to have LCF Georgia as a funder and as a connector. They knew who had what and who needed what, and they had connections to get food and other resources. We didn't have time to think about creating collaborations." -Belisa Urbina, Ser Familia

"Having a coordinating organization like LCF helped us find the way that the different groups at different levels could help. Many of us want to do more but alone, we do not have the capability. LCF finds the way for us to be more creative to carry out projects that are very relevant to our own missions. I think that is amazing. It's also important to be in contact other organizations, know what they are doing and tap into their expertise when we need them. Even if we're not doing things together, I know that if a family has an issue, and I can call LCF Georgia and they will know or help me find an answer." -Betina Kaplan, U-Lead

"LCF Georgia is relationship based, as is Latino culture. People trust LCF; they know how to work with the mainstream and play the game. They push through challenges and elevate our voices to speak truth to power. In that way, LCF Georgia is a nonprofit role model for all of us." -Jessica Nunan, Caminar Latino

"I have so much appreciation for how LCF Georgia brought us together. It was helpful to know that you have someone in your corner. They were constantly thinking, 'How can we make things easier for you or do some of the things you want to do?'" -Felix Lora, Sandy Springs Mission

"I have met lots of organizations I didn't know existed, and now we make referrals to each other. It's also helpful that the meetings are so supportive and streamlined. We belong to another coalition and I've been able to bring what I've learned about collaboration management to that coalition, and we have changed our meetings as a result." -Naomi Desta, Lifting Latinx Voices

"At LCF Georgia, we did everything we knew to ensure that people survived. We did financial assistance but we didn't know how to do that. We learned together, and we were honest about that." -Gigi Pedraza, LCF Georgia

Going Forward

Member organizations reflected on the how they operated before 2020, and many spoke of permanent changes in how they deliver services as well as their values, priorities and sustainability. In their words:

"I learned what a reserve is, as well as the importance of having one." -Día Parker, Vecinos de Buford Highway

"I think 2020 opened our eyes to a lot of things that we had taken for granted, and not just the pandemic, but also the other events of the year. You also had all of the social unrest and the elections and other things that really mean life. What does it mean when we say we want to go back to 'normal?'" -Alejandro Coss, Latin American Chamber of Commerce

"Our work shouldn't be reactive; we need to be prepared all the time. I've gotten more comfortable with asking for help, and I'm no longer afraid to take risks...We've been accustomed to think of ourselves and our families, but 2020 emphasized the importance of community consciousness." América Gruner, Coalición de Líderes Latinos

"We have been on autopilot for years, years, years. Each year was a matter of essentially repeating what we did in the previous year. 2020 gave us an opportunity to think outside the box and outside the normal. We're committed to serving families in a different way. Let's do a community assessment to see what's needed. Let's sit down and reevaluate our mission and determine what we will look like over the next five years." -Felix Lora, Sandy Springs Mission

"One of our core pillars of 'amplifying voices' changed in scope to 'amplifying democracy' to address policy and infrastructure. COVID made the connections between survival and democracy visible. Kids couldn't get food because parents were afraid of the public charge rule. We helped organizations have the courage to collectively push back on this and we intend to continue." -Gigi Pedraza, Latino Community Fund of Georgia

"Zoom is not as good as in-person meetings for our students, but we'll continue to use it to bring in guest speakers. It opens up more options for us." Betina Kaplan, U-Lead

"I think it's important for us to keep in mind that here we were, this little nonprofit with hardly any money, yet we were able to do so much. So that's important." Delicia Idlett, Unidos Latino Association

"People are paying attention. Before the George Floyd murder, people just couldn't see how the system has perpetuated harm against people of color for the last 300 years. In our organization and on our staff, we took that to heart because we cannot do this work and think that we can go back to business as usual. Everything that we have experienced in 2020 has given us an opportunity to think about what is it that we're doing for systemic change. -Amilcar Valencia, El Refugio

"I think that at the end of the day this pandemic also created a lot of opportunities. It shook us up, and that's a good thing." -Félix Lora, Sandy Springs Mission



PHOTO CREDIT: DIGNIDAD INMIGRANTE EN ATHENS

Findings: Achievements and Learnings

As a collaboration, LCF Georgia and the member organizations were able to multiply the outcomes that any one organization could achieve. As a collaboration, organizations achieved the following:

- 152,000 families received at least one box of culturally appropriate food for one week for 5 people.
- Over 14,000 families received rental assistance.
- Over 30,000 poultry plant workers, carpet manufacturers and agricultural workers and other essential workers received PPE.
- 8,200 families received diapers.
- 4,541 COVID tests were administered.
- More than 15,000 COVID-19 vaccines were given (as of August 2021).
- The State of Georgia began offering its COVID health line in multiple languages.
- 93% of the organizations experienced no revenue losses, and 86% experienced revenue increases.
- 93% of the organizations reported increased collaboration and consequently, outcomes.

The pandemic brought challenges and opportunities to each organization and to the collaboration in general, resulting in some key shared learnings. At the organizational level:

- All organizations reported that their staff and agencies learned they are capable of more than they imagined.
- All bring a deeper understanding of the experience and importance of working collaboratively.
- Each director expressed concern about going back to “normal” since “normal” for the Latinx population means a return to the conditions which create the disparities that were made evident by the pandemic.
- The experience of working through the disruption of the pandemic underscored the importance of importance of constantly reviewing missions, activities, needs, assumptions and opportunities rather than doing business as usual.
- Although at times weary, all remain hopeful for the future and remain focused on the overwhelming work that needs to be done to achieve equity for Georgia’s Latinx community.

In addition, leaders of the participating organizations reported that they learned how to successfully confront some of the common barriers to successful collaboration, including the following strategies:

- **Leaders need to trust each other:** Trust at the interpersonal and inter-organizational levels is the basis of a strong collaboration. In order for trust to happen, communication needs to be open so that all partners know the strengths and constraints of each partner.
- **Everyone needs to benefit and everyone needs to be valued:** All organizations, regardless of their size or age, learned that they have valuable assets they can bring to the table, financial or otherwise.

- **Rather than be competitive, partner organizations can lift each other up:** Nonprofit directors remarked on the importance of helping the other organizations increase their capacity to provide services and be sustainable, and that benefits the population they collectively serve.
- **Collaborations work best when goals are defined:** Collaborations are most effective when there is a clear purpose that everyone can get behind and be inspired by.
- **Good facilitation and coordination is critical.** Collaborations are most effective with coordination that is supportive, forward-thinking, and connective. This can be achieved in different ways, from hiring an experienced facilitator who serves as a neutral party to working under the umbrella of another organization.

In their words:

“I’m so proud of what we were able to achieve. We had to learn as we went, but knowing we were making a difference gave us the strength to keep moving.”
Rebeca Gibbons, Unidos Latino Association

“We had no interruption of services; we didn’t have to let anyone go; we adapted to a new service delivery model; and the most important thing: our participants learned that they can rely on us.” -Jessica Nunan, Caminar Latino

“During the pandemic, we had to move all our programs to Zoom. Staff said it couldn’t work. But they did it!” -Maritza Morelli, Los Niños Primero

“All of us learned how resilient and creative we are.” -Lifting Latinx Voices

“We learned that it’s possible to get money, and we learned that we are all essential workers.” -Beto Mendoza, Dignidad Inmigrante

“We realized in 2020 that together, we were furthering our mission for more visibility And we learned what we can accomplish when we collaborate.” Gigi Pedraza, LCF Georgia



PHOTO CREDIT: EL REFUGIO



PHOTO CREDIT: SCORZZA ARTS



PHOTO CREDIT: SER FAMILIA

Appendix

Snapshot of Member Organizations

Caminar Latino-Latinos United for Peace and Equity (LUPE), www.caminarlatino.org: Founded in 1990, Caminar Latino-LUPE creates opportunities for Latino families to transform their lives and communities and works nationally to change the social conditions that give rise to intimate partner violence. Programs are tailored for Latino families seeking to live lives free of violence, and the organization also mobilizes Atlanta-based communities through youth empowerment and leadership seminars as well as training for other service providers.



PHOTO CREDIT: CAMINAR LATINO



PHOTO CREDIT: COALICIÓN DE LÍDERES LATINOS

Coalición de Líderes Latinos, www.clila.org: Founded in 2006, Coalición de Líderes Latinos (Coalition of Latino Leaders--CLILA) promotes the social integration of Latinos, civic participation, and cultural diversity. Located in a Latinx supermarket, CLILA offers Latinx students and families in Dalton a range of services from homework assistance to English classes to leadership development.

Dignidad Inmigrante en Athens, www.dignidadinmigrante.wordpress.com: Dignidad Inmigrante en Athens (DIA) creates and/or promotes spaces for the liberation of undocumented families living in the USA. DIA offers information to the Latinx population on issues affecting them, helps community members learn to be activists, and offers community events to promote Latinx culture.



PHOTO CREDIT: DIGNIDAD INMIGRANTE EN ATHENS



El Refugio, www.elrefugiostewart.org: Georgia Detention Watch members began leading groups to visit immigrants and asylum seekers detained at Stewart Detention Center in 2008. After witnessing the challenges shared by those visiting loved ones at Stewart--traveling long distances, the trauma of family separation, and the lack of resources such as hotels and restaurants in the remote town of Lumpkin--a group of friends established El Refugio. In 2010, El Refugio opened a hospitality house offering meals and lodging at no cost. Most importantly, we offer friendship and support to the loved ones of immigrants and asylum seekers who are detained.

Latin American Chamber of Commerce of Georgia, www.laccgeorgia.org: Founded in 1998, the LACC Georgia, (formerly the Mexican American Business Chamber) fosters success through economic development initiatives that facilitate the creation and development of business ventures and also facilitate relationships between Latino and non-Latino businesses, associations, individuals and government.



PHOTO CREDIT: LACCGEORGIA



PHOTO CREDIT: LATINO COMMUNITY FUND

Latino Community Fund of Georgia, www.lcfgeorgia.org: LCF Georgia was founded in early 2017 to advance people's democracy, build and protect community and expand economic opportunity through direct support of Latinx-serving and Latinx-led organizations. With 40 member organizations, it is the only organization dedicated to fund Latinos in Georgia.

Lifting Latinx Voices, www.feministcenter.org/lifting-latinx-voices-initiative: Lifting Latinx Voices is an initiative of the Feminist Women's Health Center, founded in 1976 with the mission of providing safe, supportive and non-judgmental abortion and gynecological care services, consciousness raising meetings, and self-help workshops. The Lifting Latinx Voices Initiative is the only Latinx-led program in Georgia that focuses on addressing comprehensive reproductive and sexual health issues faced by Latinx families.



PHOTO CREDIT: LIFTING LATINX VOICES



Los Niños Primero, www.losninosprimerousa.org: Launched in 2001 and currently provides educational support for approximately 800 underserved, Latino preschool students, youth and their families per year. With programs in Sandy Springs, Roswell and Hapeville, Georgia, Los Niños Primero prepares children and families to flourish in the public-school system.

Los Vecinos de Buford Highway, <https://vecinosbh.org>: Founded in 2019, Los Vecinos de Buford Highway helps to magnify the least heard voices by facilitating spaces for residents to gather and work together towards resident-based solutions. Overall, Los Vecinos de Buford Highway seeks to cultivate community, magnify the voices of residents, grow future leaders in the Buford Highway neighborhoods in Atlanta, and preserve the distinct quality of Buford Hwy.



PHOTO CREDIT: LOS VECINOS DE BUFORD HIGHWAY



PHOTO CREDIT: MIGRANT EQUITY SOUTHEAST

Savannah Undocumented Youth Alliance (SUYA)/Migrant Equity Southeast (MESE), <https://www.facebook.com/LASUYA>: Founded in 2013 as Savannah Undocumented Youth Alliance, SUYA/MESE is a grassroots organization comprised of youth who work to end the Georgia college ban for undocumented youth. The organization focuses on bringing immigration awareness in Chatham County through information, events, and direct services.

Sandy Springs Mission, <http://www.sandyspringsmission.org>: The Sandy Springs Mission began in 1999 as a program serving disadvantaged families living in Sandy Springs in metro Atlanta. The organization addresses the immediate need of lowering the high school drop-out rate among educationally at-risk Latino children in the community. We transform families through education by providing year-round academic enrichment, life-skills, and leadership programs to students attending local public schools.



PHOTO CREDIT: SCORZZA ARTS

Scorzza Arts, www.scorzzartsacademy.com: Founded in 2010 teaching music at a local church. Since then they have offered music, art, and dance classes to over 900 children in Spanish and English, regardless of their ability to pay.

Ser Familia, www.serfamilia.org: Founded in 2001, Ser Familia offers preventive family services and equips Latinos with the tools, resources and skills they need to move from crisis to thriving. The organization serves over 7,000 clients every year in its 4 locations in Metro Atlanta: as well as in partnership with other institutions providing culturally and linguistically responsive programs, for couples, youth, and parents, and support for survivors of intimate partner violence



PHOTO CREDIT: U LEAD ATHENS

U-Lead Athens, www.uleadathens.org: U-Lead Athens is a volunteer-led nonprofit organization dedicated to enabling college access to higher education for immigrant students and students from immigrant families. The organization focuses on un(der)documented students: Those with DACA, temporary protected status, children of undocumented parents and other limiting documentation statuses. U-Lead offers college

preparation and mentoring, FAFSA completion and renewal, DACA renewal, tutoring, scholarships, and connections to community services.

Unidos Latino Association,
www.unidoslatinoassociation.org: Established in 2016, Unidos Latino Association provides assistance and resources within the community to help build cultural awareness and provide learning opportunities. Programs assist people transitioning into the area and help increase diversity by improving communication and interactions with existing residents, schools, government agencies, and businesses.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNIDOS LATINOS ASSOCIATION

About the Consultant

Laureen Fredella is a New York City based nonprofit consultant with more than 30 years of experience in the nonprofit sector. Ms. Fredella is an accomplished professional who has worked in social service and education settings at all levels. She has worked with over 20 nonprofits and has extensive experience in grant writing, program development, strategic planning, training, and writing key documents such as annual reports and cases of support. Ms. Fredella has a Bachelor's degree in Spanish and a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics/Teaching English as a Second Language from Georgia State University.