

What Happens When You Give the Community Resources It Needs: Using a Community-Led Approach to Assess Farmworker COVID-19 Needs and Assistance

Community-Based Promising Practice

The Latino Community Fund, Inc. (LCF Georgia) was founded in 2017 to provide economic funding to groups that do critical work in the state but lack access to networks of funding and power. Fast forward to 2020, due to the onset of the pandemic, the community of South Georgia was especially impacted. This community is primarily composed of farmworkers or farmworkers who have transitioned into other industries. The economic and social support needs of the community in southern Georgia led LCF Georgia to create the South Georgia Navigation Program (SGNP), a community led, community-staffed program. The program was developed based on the findings from a local community-led assessment to ensure local needs were met with practices informed by the community itself. This program not only provides resources and support to the community but ensures sustainable community development in a region where farmworkers have access to limited resources.



Organization that Implemented the Practice:

[Latino Community Fund of Georgia](#) is a 501(c)(3) membership organization supporting Latinx communities in Georgia. They are both a philanthropic intermediary and a direct service provider. Advancing people's democracy, protecting and building community, and facilitating economic opportunity are the three pillars LCF Georgia uses as guiding principles in their efforts to grow the Georgia Latinx community's rights, awareness, education, and access to opportunities. LCF Georgia was founded in 2017 "to bring dollars from the community, for the community, to those groups that were doing critical work across the state, yet had no access to networks with power or money."

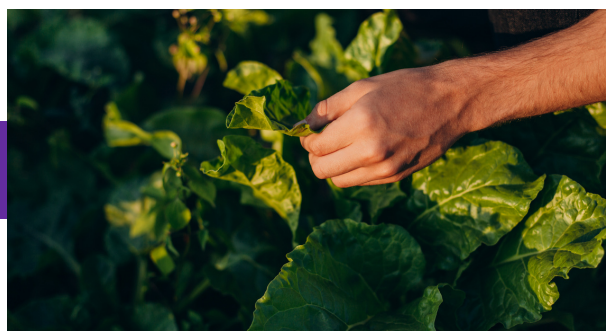
Description of the Practice:

As a response to the economic and social support needed for farmworkers in southern Georgia, LCF Georgia sought to take action in supporting this community. In order to successfully and effectively support the community, LCF Georgia implemented formative research period where the Atlanta LCF Georgia team traveled south to learn and get guidance from those affected the most by the pandemic to best address their needs. The Unidos Coalition supported the initial stages of this work and implementation. Using input from the community and partnerships with local Latinx businesses, they adapted their COVID-19 cash assistance program and developed the South Georgia Navigator Program.

Key Strategies:

Formative Research

When LCF Georgia began hearing about the needs of the farmworker community in South Georgia, they deployed a team to visit the community and provide outreach. This strategy served multiple purposes. First, LCF Georgia had not worked in this area of the state. Deploying this team allowed the organization to learn about the current landscape of the area. Second, this allowed LCF Georgia to introduce themselves and build relationships with the community. The team came in with the intent to provide direct cash assistance to those community members that needed help due to the pandemic. This immediate action allowed them to get a standing in the community and start building a trusting relationship, as this assistance was provided with no strings attached. This also allowed the community members in helping LCF Georgia understand the situation in the community and its needs. As the LCF Georgia team did outreach to the community, they asked questions to the community members about their needs and took note of their responses to inform strategy development. During this deployment, LCF Georgia also started building relationships with Latinx-owned businesses in the area. This work allowed LCF Georgia to understand how to best provide support to the community and the steps needed to adapt LCF Georgia's current efforts and develop new programming.



Partnership with Local Latinx Businesses in South Georgia

During the formative research stage, LCF Georgia quickly learned about the area’s lack of social support and service infrastructure, including the lack of non-profit organizations effectively serving the Latinx population in the area and even fewer serving the large farmworker population. While there were a few organizations, they could not fully cover and provide enough support to the community. However, a strong network of Latinx businesses existed in the area. These businesses not only were numerous and well-connected with each other, but they also knew and had rapport with the Latinx community in the area, including the farmworker community. LCF Georgia collaborated with these businesses to provide health information through the distribution of print materials and as sites to conduct outreach. Business owners agreed to act as venues for community events and outreach places where the team could intercept community members to provide health information, services and inform them of LCF Georgia’s cash assistance program.

South Georgia Navigation Program

Given the lack of local infrastructure and the challenges encountered by large populations of H-2A guest workers and undocumented farmworkers in the area, LCF Georgia developed a Navigator team to continuously provide responsive programming to workers in this community. The navigators are local community members that have ties to the farmworker community in the area. These navigators provide outreach to the community, help them navigate and link to resources needed, and help with the cash assistance program.



Pictured: Navigators providing outreach to community members

Cash Assistance Application Process

Based on the initial community assessment, LCF Georgia learned more about the demographics of the community and the barriers that prevented this community from accessing social support systems. When refining the application process for their cash assistance funds for workers in South Georgia, LCF Georgia was intentional in making the application as simple and unobtrusive as possible to help bring down the barriers they saw in other support applications. After simplifying the application process, LCF Georgia began seeing an increase in application submissions.



Pictured: LCF Georgia staff assisting community members with the cash assistance application.

Key Challenges:

Limited Infrastructure

A key challenge was the limited number of organizations providing services to the Latinx farmworker community in South Georgia. Not having social service support was one of the reasons the community was in need from the beginning and it was only exacerbated by the pandemic. The other challenge was that LCF Georgia needed organizations in the area that they could partner with such as clinics, non-profits, and other community-based organizations. Instead LCF Georgia had to partner with local businesses and the local community itself.

The Impact of Historical and Cultural Trauma

The farmworker community in South Georgia has historically been under-resourced. This community has also continuously faced discrimination. Many are undocumented and face additional challenges and barriers when needing support or are not given the support. Many undocumented workers are hesitant to seek support out of fear an organization may share information with Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE). Area advocates have reported that H-2A workers also experience multiple types of exploitation, such as withholding of passports, secluded/restricted living conditions, and human trafficking. It comes as no surprise that the community in the area would be apprehensive about a new organization coming in until trust was built.

Resources Needed and Expenses:

- Time (for formative research and trust building)
- Funding Sources
 - [Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#)
 - [Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation](#)
 - [The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation](#)
 - [William Josef Foundation](#)
 - [Jesse Parker Williams Foundation](#)
- Community members
- Staffing
 - Formative research: 2
 - South Georgia Navigator Program
 - 3 LCF Georgia staff
 - 5 contractors
- Partnerships
 - [Unidos Coalition](#)



Partnerships:

While there were no specific partners LCF Georgia was able to collaborate with in South Georgia, they did work with local Latinx-owned and other businesses. Most recently, they have been able to partner with universities for events and have begun to develop partnerships with the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) in the area and two nursing schools. LCF Georgia leads the Unidos Coalition, with over 20 partner organizations, which at the beginning of the pandemic provided support to LCF's work through funding, resources, and other materials.

LCF Georgia identifies the community of South Georgia as a key partner, including local business owners, schools, churches and community members. Not only because they have first-hand experience on what is needed, but they are also able to guide programs, such as the adaptation of the cash assistance program and the development of the SGNP to best serve the community.

Evaluation: Data Collected and Results:

From March 2020 to October 2022, LCF Georgia has helped 578 farmworker families with rent, utilities, medical expenses, food, clothing, and funerary expenses. They received 2,685 applications for assistance and distributed \$521,225.97 in direct assistance funds in 17 South Georgia counties.

As of October 2022, LCF Georgia has partnered with 12 different vaccine providers in over 50 different community locations (Mexican, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran Consulates, churches, schools, restaurants, and other community-owned businesses and venues):

- A total of 3,134 vaccines were administered in 9 counties.
 - 1,217 were first doses, and as of October 2022, 1169 people have been fully vaccinated.
- 31,000 people visited LCF's Spanish-only website with key information on COVID-19 prevention, care, immunization, and other referral information and Know Your Rights information.



Learn More:

- <https://lcfgeorgia.org/>
- <https://www.unidosgeorgia.com/>
- <https://www.unidosgeorgia.com/mapa>

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Pro Tip:

*When working on new programming,
be community-forward.*

*Involve the community from the beginning,
as this will create buy-in and ensure that programming
is tailored by and for the community to best serve their
needs. This is especially critical for communities that
continuously face historical and cultural trauma and live
in communities that lack the necessary resources to
assist them.*

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