




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Kellee Coleman, Interim Chief Equity Officer 

THROUGH: Jason Alexander, Chief of Staff

DATE: November 2, 2022

SUBJECT: **Update on Guaranteed Income Pilot Program (Resolution No. 20210603-073)**

At its regular meeting on May 5, 2022, City Council authorized the City Manager to negotiate and execute a contract with UpTogether (contractor) to develop and administer the City's Guaranteed Income Pilot Program. As part of this authorization, City Council directed the City Manager to report back in [three months](#), six months, and upon completion of the pilot. This memo serves as the requested 6-month update with a focus on participant profile and pilot evaluation design.

Participant Profile

Participants in the City of Austin Guaranteed Income Pilot received their first payments in September. After enrolling, they had the opportunity to complete a baseline survey to share more information about themselves, their household, and their housing situation. The information below is based on the responses to the baseline survey as analyzed by the Urban Institute. Sixty percent (n=81) participated in the baseline survey.

Major findings of this survey include:

- 30.04% of participants have a household income below \$10,000, and 51.8% below \$15,000
- 64.2% receive a public benefit of some kind, including 49.4% receiving Medical Assistance, 28.3% SNAP, and 22.2% housing support
- 30.7% indicated they were unable to meet basic needs
- 47.8% are at risk of eviction or becoming unhoused

Evaluation of the Pilot

UpTogether is partnering with researchers from the Urban Institute, a nonprofit nonpartisan research organization that provides data and evidence to help advance upward mobility and equity. The Urban Institute will conduct a study of the City of Austin Guaranteed Income pilot. The study will focus on understanding more about:

- The choices households make around housing and how they utilize unrestricted cash to achieve their goals;

- Changes (outcomes) in housing stability, income, food security, economic mobility including retention or (re-) entry into the labor market or education/training opportunities, well-being, and financial capacity;
- How households utilize social networks to achieve their goals and how these networks may be affected by the cash payments; and
- Household interactions with formal helping systems (e.g., benefits), focusing on both public and private sources of support, and how cash payments affect these interactions.

Households in the guaranteed income pilot can opt in but are not required to be a part of this study. The study includes the following components and methods:

- **Quantitative analysis through surveys, including comparison of outcomes to external data sources:** The study will include a survey of pilot participants at baseline, approximately six months from the first payment, one year from first payment, and six months post completion to measure changes in housing and financial stability, food security, well-being, social connectedness, goals, and income and employment, and compare pilot participant outcomes longitudinally and to other external data sources. The multi-phase survey will provide insights on short and long-term participant outcomes and how this varies by a variety of social, geographic, and demographic factors including race, gender, income, and neighborhood. The study will also compare the City of Austin Guaranteed Income pilot participant outcomes with other resident outcomes locally and nationally using external data from the American Community Survey, American Housing Survey, Household Pulse Survey, Health Reform Monitoring Survey, and Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households. These surveys are conducted yearly or biennially which will allow the researchers to compare pilot participant survey responses with timely data (rather than a single point in time) and understand if participant changes over time reflect larger scale changes at the neighborhood, jurisdiction, or national levels. Using data from these sources, the study will explore questions such as:
 - How does the employment, housing, education, income, race, and gender of pilot participants compare to other residents in participants' respective neighborhoods, in Austin, and in the US?
 - How do these employment, housing, and income outcomes change over time for pilot participants and how does this compare to changes in these outcomes in their respective neighborhoods, in Austin, and in the US?
 - How do participants' housing stability compare to other residents nationally and do any differences change over the course of the pilot?
 - How do participants' mental and general health compare to other residents nationally and do any differences change over the course of the pilot?
- **Qualitative analysis of impact through pilot participant interviews:** Urban will interview a subset of pilot participants; of that group, Urban will conduct further interviews with a smaller subset to build out in-depth case studies. Through the interviews, Urban will explore how participation in the pilot has impacted household budgets and other sources of income including other benefits; how participants chose to use the monthly cash and how this supports their own goals including for housing stability, well-being, and economic mobility; how participants utilize their social networks and sources of community support, with a focus on whether the new cash altered these networks (in form or quality); and the experience of participants in getting support from formal public and private helping systems and how this experience may have been

affected by the cash payments. This qualitative analysis will complement the quantitative survey analysis by providing a deeper understanding and picture of participants' circumstances, outcomes, goals, and challenges.

- **Descriptive profiles of pilot participants:** Urban will create pilot participant and neighborhood profiles to frame the analysis, including historic and current-day barriers to economic success experienced by the communities represented in the pilot.
- **Benefits and Policy Analysis:** Urban will identify opportunities and challenges to using unrestricted cash to meet the goals and housing stability needs of the primary audience of the pilot. Data for this component will be drawn from interviews with policymakers and other key stakeholders (city and state level) and a review of state and city benefits policies. Recommendations for city and state policymaker audiences will be featured, with a particular focus on understanding how cash transfers impact participant benefits.

Deliverables

Key deliverables include:

- Fall 2022: Enrollment and baseline analyses that provide descriptive profiles of pilot participants.
- May 2023: Six-month fact sheet with initial findings and recommendations.
- February 2024: Policy brief with fact sheet featuring findings after 12 months.
- Summer 2024: Final findings report with fact sheet.

Staff will continue to work with the contractor to ensure the program meets all direction provided by Council. For further information please contact Kellee Coleman, Interim Chief Equity Officer at Kellee.Coleman@austintexas.gov.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager