



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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CHICAGO RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PILOT RECEIVES OVER 176,000 APPLICATIONS; PARTICIPANT SELECTION STARTS THIS MONTH

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Commissioner Brandie Knazze announced over 176,000 applications were submitted for the Chicago Resilient Communities Pilot, the \$31.5 million monthly cash assistance program to benefit low-income Chicago residents and families, who have faced disproportionate economic hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chicago Resilient Communities Pilot will be one of the largest monthly cash assistance programs in the nation and will support 5,000 low-income households with \$500 a month for 12 months to provide greater financial stability and support an equitable economic recovery. To be eligible, applicants must live in Chicago, be 18 years or older, have household income of less than or equal to 250% of the Federal Poverty Line, and have experienced a negative economic hardship due to COVID-19.

The 3-week application window was open from 9:00 a.m. Monday, April 25 to 11:59 p.m. Friday, May 13. On the first day alone, more than 100,000 people began an application.

"The fact that so many people from all over our city applied to this pilot underscores the need for us to innovate and reimagine how we uplift people and their communities," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Putting cash directly into the hands of people who need it most is one of the most efficient and effective ways for us to support residents working hard to regain economic stability."

The City received applications from all 77 community areas in Chicago, with at least 300 applications submitted from each ward. The demand indicates the importance of flexible, unrestricted cash assistance that can empower residents to decide how to best meet their needs and goals.



“We need bold solutions to address the many needs that Chicago residents currently face,” said DFSS Commissioner Brandie Knazze. “This pilot provides households the autonomy to meet their needs on their own terms. As part of our city’s Chicago Recovery Plan, we believe strongly in the impact that the CRCP will have on families as they gain the flexibility and choice necessary to meet daily demands.”

Preliminary analysis of applicant demographics shows that 64% of applicants live below the poverty line (100% FPL) and 40% live in deep poverty (at or below 50% FPL). Data on the racial and ethnic identities of applicants show:

- 68% of applicants identified as Black or African American
- 24% of applicants identified as Latino or Hispanic
- 15% of applicants identified as white
- 3% of applicants identified as Asian

Applicants could select more than one racial identity. Other data points include:

- 62% of applicants identified as a parent or a caregiver
- 70% of applicants identified as a woman
- 17% of applicants identified as having a disability
- 9% of applicants indicated that they are housing insecure or homeless

The high participation rate is attributed in part to the robust efforts of the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago and [five other delegate agencies](#), which operationalized outreach and application assistance strategies designed to lower participation barriers for vulnerable individuals. Over 290 information and assistance opportunities were held across all 77 community areas during the three-week application window. Application assistance was available in 30 languages, and delegate agencies provided information to 422 additional community-based organizations to promote the pilot application.

“The YWCA is honored to have been selected to lead outreach for this historic program and proud of our role in assisting residents from across the city in successfully completing the application,” said Nicole Robinson, CEO of YWCA Metropolitan Chicago. “The applicant demographic information reinforces what we already knew: that the pandemic has had a disproportionate economic impact on women and people of color. We look forward to our continued work in partnership with the city of Chicago to advocate for and deliver equitable opportunities to the communities we serve.”

Ensuring accessibility and minimizing applicant burden were top priorities for the City and GiveDirectly, the nonprofit program administrator. The AidKit technology platform offered user-friendly features like a photo upload of documentation and



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was tested with local residents and major screen readers before going live. As a result, the average time of completion for the application was just over 27 minutes, with 78% of all applicants successfully submitting their application across six available languages.

“We designed this application to be something that people could do no matter where they were or what they were doing; we saw evidence of people applying everywhere from the homes and cars to Chicago Public Libraries and DFSS service centers. Our mobile-first application made it as easy for folks to apply from their phones as from a computer, with or without assistance,” said Sarah Moran, U.S. Director of GiveDirectly, the Pilot Administrator.

GiveDirectly’s multi-step eligibility screening and selection process is already underway:

- First, all applicants are being placed in an initial lottery to create a pool of roughly 13,000 people whose applications will be closely reviewed for eligibility. The lottery is designed to prioritize households living in poverty and those living in communities with preexisting economic hardship.
- Eligible applicants will then be placed into a final selection lottery where 5,000 households will be invited to enroll in the monthly cash assistance program.
- Pending final verification, benefits counseling, and successful enrollment, most households will receive their first payments at the end of June. Pilot participants who need additional support during the enrollment phase may receive their first payment at the end of July.

All 176,000+ applicants will be notified about their status in the days after Memorial Day weekend via email, text, and/or phone. All applicants in the final selection lottery will also be invited to participate in the pilot's optional research study if they provided consent in their application. The study is being run by the Inclusive Economy Lab and includes a stipend for participation. For more information, visit the updated FAQs at chicago.gov/cashpilot.

The Chicago Resilient Communities Pilot is just one initiative within the broader \$1.2 billion Chicago Recovery Plan to promote safe and thriving communities and an equitable economic recovery from COVID-19. Learn more at chicago.gov/recoveryplan

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