

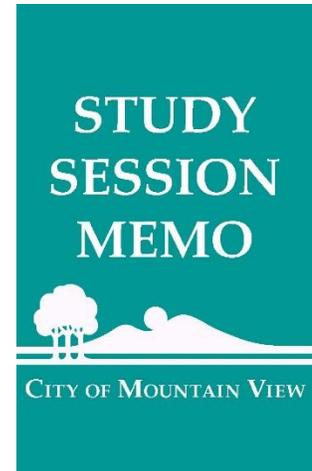
DATE: September 28, 2021

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Christina Gilmore, Assistant to the City Manager
Audrey Seymour Ramberg, Assistant City Manager/Chief Operating Officer

VIA: Kimbra McCarthy, City Manager

TITLE: **Mountain View Solidarity Fund**



PURPOSE

The purpose of this Study Session item is to receive Council input on the City's award of funding to enhance the Mountain View Solidarity Fund program.

BACKGROUND

At its June 22, 2021 meeting, the City Council appropriated \$3 million as part of the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Adopted Budget to support three programs for direct cash assistance to Mountain View residents. The three programs include \$1 million for a Guaranteed Basic Income (GBI) pilot, \$1 million to the Community Services Agency (CSA), and \$1 million to the Mountain View Solidarity Fund. Each initiative focuses on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. Staff summarized the GBI and CSA program parameters in a separate Study Session item on September 28. The Mountain View Solidarity Fund enhanced program parameters and status are addressed below in this memorandum.

The Mountain View Solidarity Fund program aligns with the City Council's Community for All priority in the City's Strategic Roadmap to promote programs, policies, initiatives, events, and actions to protect vulnerable populations and preserve the socioeconomic and cultural diversity of the community.

Mountain View Solidarity Fund

The Mountain View Solidarity Fund (Solidarity Fund) is an all-volunteer mutual-aid fund that began in spring 2020 as a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the immediate negative economic impact Santa Clara County's Shelter-in-Place Order had on vulnerable and undocumented residents in Mountain View.

The Solidarity Fund consists of eight dedicated Latina volunteers who are Mountain View residents and have served as informal community leaders in the Latino community through their involvement in parent groups, schools, churches, community-based organizations (CBO), and neighborhood groups. Several volunteers are also graduates of the City's Spanish Language Civic Leadership Academy and serve as City of Mountain View Ambassadors.

The primary goal of the Solidarity Fund is to raise funds and distribute financial assistance to undocumented people and families who, for a variety of reasons, have not been able to access funds or programs from safety-net providers or CBOs or State and Federal programs that provide economic relief to people impacted by the pandemic through job loss, reduced working hours, school closures, or COVID-19 related illness. The secondary and tertiary goals of the Solidarity Fund are to build self-determination and power amongst working-class Latino residents and to demonstrate the community's capacity to manage and govern resources through community-based participatory grantmaking.

During the start-up phase in 2020, the Solidarity Fund raised \$20,000 in private donations from community members, friends, and neighbors and distributed \$500 each to 40 families. As of August 2021, the Solidarity Fund had raised an additional \$100,000 for a total of \$120,000 in donations from private donors and local foundations to distribute one-time, flexible cash assistance to over 110 of the most vulnerable families in Mountain View. Having demonstrated tremendous commitment to and positive impact on the community, the Solidarity Fund has earned the support and admiration of the Los Altos Mountain View Community Foundation as well as the City.

Los Altos Mountain View Community Foundation Fiscal Sponsorship

In January 2021, the Solidarity Fund entered into a one-year agreement with the Los Altos Mountain View Community Foundation (LAMV/CF) to become a fiscally sponsored project of the Foundation. Through fiscal sponsorship, LAMV/CF serves as an incubator to emerging nonprofits and provides infrastructure, administrative, and marketing support and assistance to pilot projects that do not qualify for tax-exempt status on their own. As a fiscally sponsored project, the Solidarity Fund benefits from LAMV/CF's ability to accept donations and lend their tax-exempt status to the project. At the same time, the Solidarity Fund can focus on building out its operations and testing a nonprofit concept that directly benefits residents in the community. The Solidarity Fund has expressed their desire to remain under the umbrella of LAMV/CF as a fiscally sponsored project and does not have a timeline for consideration to become a stand-alone nonprofit.

Based on the Solidarity Fund’s fiscally sponsored status, as a part of the parameters for the award of City funds to enhance the work of the Solidarity Fund, staff recommends the City enter into an agreement with LAMV/CF to receive the funds and oversee the fiscal management of the Solidarity Fund’s distribution of direct cash assistance to eligible Mountain View residents. More information on this recommendation is addressed later in this memorandum.

DISCUSSION

Timeline of Enhanced Program Development

Staff met with representatives of the Solidarity Fund six times between May and August 2021 to learn about the existing program, share information about City procedures and legal requirements, and develop a set of enhanced program parameters for the Solidarity Fund, as shown in Figure 1 below. Simultaneous translation and interpretation was provided for all virtual meetings and agendas to support active engagement between English- and Spanish-speaking participants. Staff has also met with representatives of LAMV/CF on multiple occasions.

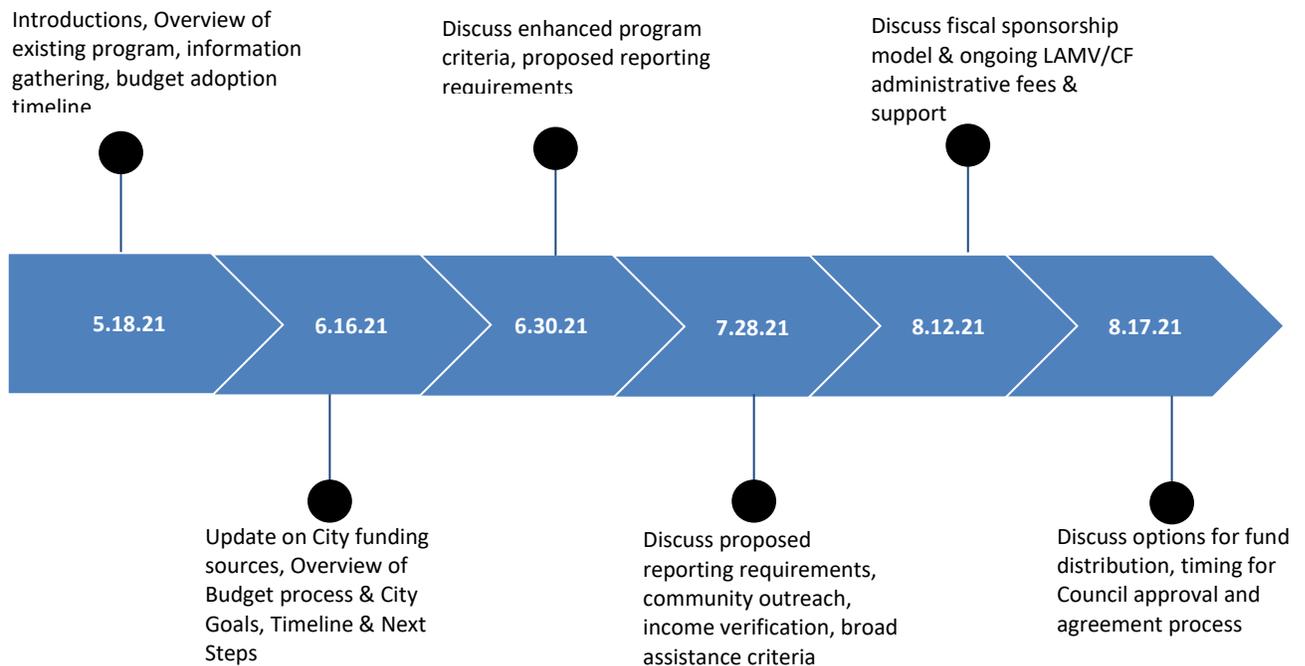


Figure 1: Timeline of Enhanced Program Development

Proposed Program Enhancements

As mentioned earlier in this memorandum, the Solidarity Fund has focused on helping undocumented people or families, specifically in the Latino community, providing \$500 grants to approximately 110 households.

The City Council's appropriation of \$1 million enables the Solidarity Fund to provide larger grants to more Mountain View residents and also supports Council's commitment to assist community members most in need through one-time direct cash assistance. The parameters below reflect the legal and fiscal requirements and program enhancements associated with this significant award of City funding for distribution by the Solidarity Fund. Building on the existing success and strength of the Solidarity Fund, the new recommended program parameters include:

- One-time financial assistance of up to \$4,000 per family unit.
- Broad-based financial assistance (e.g., rent relief, utility bills, loans, credit cards, medical bills, food, etc.).
- Eligibility expanded to include any Mountain View resident or family, including undocumented residents, who is Extremely Low-Income (ELI) (30% of area median income (AMI)) and has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Expanded program outreach to neighborhood and community-based organizations in Mountain View.
- Assistance with educating and connecting residents to local safety-net providers (e.g., CSA, State rental assistance programs, or other CBOs) that aid residents.
- Weekly reporting.
- Monthly summary of expenditures.

Applicant Outreach and Assessment Process

In addition to tapping into their established networks, the Solidarity Fund will conduct broad community outreach to neighborhood groups, CBOs, nonprofits, schools, faith-based institutions, and safety-net providers to ensure that as many Mountain View residents who meet the very low-income eligibility requirement as possible can apply for assistance.

The Solidarity Fund will continue to use the assessment process established during the program’s start-up phase to assess each applicant and ensure that applicants meet the program and eligibility criteria outlined in this memorandum. The Solidarity Fund team of volunteers participates in the applicant assessment process by conducting interviews with the applicant to understand their current circumstances and financial needs and establish a personal connection with the applicant.

Once the volunteers collect information, the Solidarity Fund meets as a committee to review each application and determine the funding amount. Every funding decision is made by consensus of the eight volunteers and is based on the eligibility and need of the applicant and the amount of funds available. Included in the enhanced program parameters is the flexibility for the Solidarity Fund to provide one-time, direct cash assistance in amounts ranging from \$1,000 up to \$4,000 per family unit based on need. Assuming that each family unit could be eligible to receive up to \$4,000, the Solidarity Fund anticipates it could assist approximately 250 households in Mountain View.

Upon approval of the direct cash assistance, one of three Solidarity Fund volunteers, who serve as authorized advisory board members, submits a check request to LAMV/CF for the approved amount of cash assistance. Payments are made directly to each applicant. The Solidarity Fund tracks each check to confirm that the applicant receives the approved cash assistance. As part of the Solidarity Fund’s follow-up with each recipient, a proposed program enhancement requirement is for the Solidarity Fund to assist with educating and connecting recipients to local safety-net providers and State resources (e.g., rental relief assistance programs). The applicant assessment and funding decision process flow is represented in Figure 2 below.

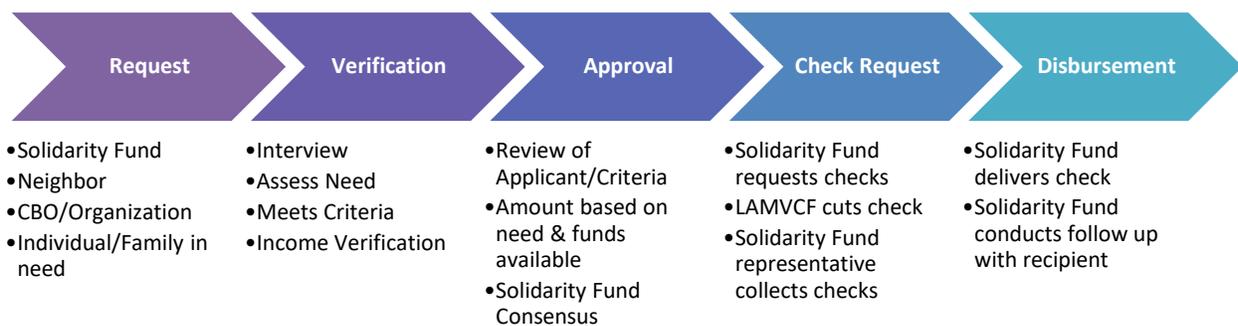


Figure 2: Applicant Assessment and Funding Decision Process

Reporting

As a part of the applicant review process described above, the Solidarity Fund also gathers information from applicants to assess each request for cash assistance. The assessment includes the following data that is anonymized and only known to the Solidarity Fund volunteers to protect the applicant's privacy:

- Name, phone number, address.
- Brief description of financial situation or hardship.
- Amount of assistance needed or requested.
- How much are they behind on rent?
- What are their day-to-day expenses?
- Have there been any family health impacts?
- Are they eligible for government assistance?
- Are they eligible for unemployment?
- Did they receive a Federal Stimulus check for 2020 or 2021?

The Solidarity Fund does not ask applicants about their immigration status or request supporting documentation (e.g., pay stubs, credit card statements, or lease agreements). The decision to collect minimal supporting documentation from applicants is deliberate and attributes to the Solidarity Fund's success in quickly disbursing cash assistance to eligible families experiencing economic hardship. To support the Solidarity Fund's goal of distributing City funds to eligible community members as quickly as feasible, staff supports the Solidarity Fund's request to keep documentation to a minimum for applicants.

Staff recommends that the Solidarity Fund provide weekly reporting to the City and submit a summary statement of expenditures at the end of each month. The weekly reporting shall consist of:

- The total number of people in each household assisted.
- The total number of applicants receiving other cash assistance.
- Identification of where additional cash assistance received comes from.
- The average amount of Solidarity Fund cash assistance given.
- Verification that the applicant lives in one of six Mountain View zip codes.
- Verification of income eligibility (ELI or 30% AMI).

Proposed Terms of the LAMV/CF Agreement

As referenced at the beginning of this memorandum, in January 2021, the Solidarity Fund entered into a one-year agreement with LAMV/CF to become a fiscally sponsored

project. As the fiscal sponsor, LAMV/CF can enter into an agreement with the City to receive and track City funds for distribution by the Solidarity Fund, provide administrative support that includes assisting with weekly and monthly reporting as required by the City, and meet the City's insurance and liability requirements as outlined in the City's standard agreement.

Staff proposes the following parameters for an agreement with LAMV/CF:

- The agreement term covers the period of November 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.
- City funds will be disbursed in three installments of \$400,000, \$300,000, and \$300,000 based on performance and adherence to the enhanced program parameters.
- Administrative fees do not exceed 7.5% or \$75,000 of the \$1 million in appropriations.
- LAMV/CF can return administrative fees not expended back into the Solidarity Fund without City Council approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests Council feedback on the following question:

Does Council support staff's recommended parameters for use of City funds to support an enhanced Mountain View Solidarity Fund program and agreement terms with the LAMV/CF as the Solidarity Fund's fiscal sponsor?

NEXT STEPS

Following feedback from the City Council at this Study Session, staff will return to the City Council at the October 12, 2021 meeting with a Consent item to seek Council authorization for the City Manager or designee to enter into an agreement with the Los Altos Mountain View Community Foundation to administer the Mountain View Solidarity Fund program.

PUBLIC NOTICING

This City Council agenda is advertised on Channel 26, and the agenda and this Study Session memorandum appear on the City's website.

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